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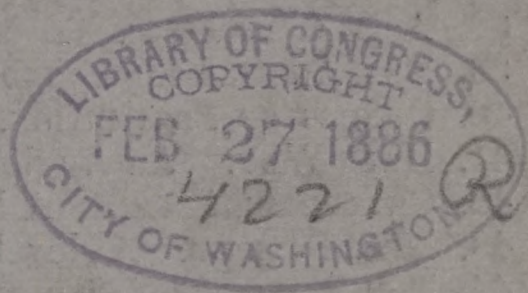
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THE LAST OF THE MACALLISTERS

A Novel



40
By MRS. AMELIA E. BARR

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Books you may hold readily in your hand are the most useful, after all
DR. JOHNSON

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS


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THE LAST OF THE MACALLISTERS.

CHAPTER I.

CHIEF AND LAWYER.

“Oh, where are the pretty men of yore?
Oh, where are the brave men gone?
Oh, where are the heroes of the North?
Each under his own gray stone.
The chiefs that were foremost of old,
Macdonald, and brave Lochiel,
The Gordon, the Murray, and the Graham,
With their clansmen true as steel.”

“MACALLISTER, it is the height of nonsense for you to fret and fume at this rate. Two things you need never be angry at—what you can help and what you cannot help; and it's plain you cannot help Cameron buying Assynt and Balkerry. Do you know him at all?”

“Know him! know a trading body who has dared to offer siller for an auld estate, sir; an estate as auld as the Flood, sir; a deal aulder, sir; siller scrapit together by some kind o' handiwork! Who was his grandfather? A puir Glasgo' wabster! That's a bonnie origin for a Highland chief! *Ugh!* And what's to come of the MacLeods?”

“They have shaken hands wi' Cameron, and are goin' to turn herring-fishers.”

“The MacLeods and the Camerons! Certie! There's a bonnie pair o' them.”

“Come, come, laird; it is ill sitting in Rome and striving wi' the pope, as the saying is. A man can live without his

kin, but he canna live without his neighbors, and I am free to tell you that the wood in the Reay forest wants to be let alone now, and there's that bill due the Perth Bank. It's been noted and protested already, MacAllister, and I'm thinking there is a writ o' *horning and caption* on the road to Strathleven. I heard of it at Tain."

"It is a far cry from Tain to Strathleven, Fraser; and what does MacAllister care for a wheen lawyer's papers? I'll just send a dozen o' my gillies to meet them, and convoy them back o'er the hills again."

"That's aboon your thumb, laird. The law is ower strong for any Highland chief now, and it's folly to show your teeth—unless you can bite."

"It is na twenty years since I went wi' five hundred wild MacAllisters into Moray's land, and every man o' them took his prey."

"Ah weel, laird! *Then was then*, but *now's the now*. The MacAllisters were never saints, nor did they ever get the name o' it."

"They were never lawyers, anyway, nor factors, nor counting bodies, and you'll never speak against the MacAllisters again, Fraser."

"My tongue isna under your belt, laird."

"It's weel you say that under my roof, Fraser. Gude manners you may hae, sir, but you dinna carry them about wi' you."

"If a' things were true, laird, that would be nae lie. But there's no folly like falling out, and I'm lawyer enough, if I keep my tongue, to keep my siller likewise."

"How dare you anger me thus, Fraser?"

"Dare is a hard word to crack, laird."

"*Umff! Umff!! Umff!!!* Better be going, sir. The gate is wide open afore you."

But Fraser filled his glass, and tied up carefully some accounts and papers, and then, with his hat in his hand, said,

"I shall stay a' night at Donald Du MacAllister's, and may-

be by the morn you'll cool and come to yourself, laird." Then he went slowly down the mountain path, muttering at intervals: "A man should haud his tongue in an ill time; and as for MacAllister's anger, I'll never fash my head about it. I ken him as weel as if I had gane through him wi' a lighted candle, and his ill words are only frae the teeth forward; his heart is a' right. Maybe I should hae keepit a stiller tongue in my head, but as gude gie the insult as tak' it. And I needna do it again; once is no custom."

Just at this point in his soliloquy he turned a sharp corner in the rocky descent, and for a moment forgot everything but the scene before him. He had been among mountains shouldering one another up to the sky, and there! another step, and a world of valleys was at his feet! Valleys like emeralds, and hills like amethyst, and streams of silver tumbling down deep ravines, overgrown with bracken and bell-heather.

"It's a bonnie land!" he cried; "a bonnie land! and it would be a sair pity for young Hector to lose it. If the auld laird wasna so contrairie, sae aggravating, I would, yes, I would—" And he turned round in an irresolute fashion and faced Strathleven again.

But he did not return, for clear and cheerily a strong young voice began chanting just below him,

"Little wat ye wha's coming!
Duncan's coming, Donald's coming,
Colin's coming, Ronald's coming,
Dougald's coming, Lauchlan's coming,
MacAllister and a's coming,
Borland and his men's coming,
Cameron and McLean's coming,
Gordon and McGregor's coming,
Ilka dunywastle's coming."

"Hector, fair-fa' you, lad! Why are ye singing these auld-warld rhymes? Let byganes be byganes, lad. Thae Stuarts are unlucky folk, and ill-luck is catching. Let them alone, Hector, your father had trouble enough in the '15, my lad."

“That may be so, Fraser; but when my men are tired, or hungry, a lilt about—ye ken wha’—makes the hardest hill as easy as dancing. But you are turning your face the wrong way; Strathleven is up, not down.”

“I know that, but the laird and I hae been calling each ither ill names; and I am not going back to Strathleven to-night—the morn’s the morn—but I am not going back to-night. Yet there are counts to cast, and MacAllister will neither see, nor hear, nor meddle with them.”

“Where are you going, then?”

“To Donald Du’s—and you had better come along with me.”

“If it is needful, yes; but I must send the lads home, they are tired and hungry.”

The lads were about a score in number—a score men such as could hardly be found, except in Caithness and Sutherland, giants in stature, in strength, and in heart; “pretty men, every ane o’ them,” as Fraser admiringly allowed, though they were all distinctly inferior to the young laird. He said a few words to the gilly nearest to him, and, lifting his bonnet to his companions, motioned to them to proceed without him.

In this interval Hector’s bright face had gathered a slight shadow. He knew that only some event of importance had brought Fraser to Strathleven out of his usual order of coming, and he had lived long enough in Edinburgh to be aware that the lawyer’s bills and papers which his father treated with such sublime scorn were capable of holding their own, even in the wilds of Sutherland.

But down the narrow mountain path it was impossible to converse, and the two men walked on in silence until they came to Donald Du’s cottage. It was a little stone hut of three rooms, very much superior to the ordinary shielings of the MacAllisters; for Donald Du was the laird’s foster-brother, and on him rested the actual direction of all the chief’s orders. He was eating his supper when they entered, and though it was July, the table was drawn close to the peat fire.

“Fa’s tat? Maister Fraser and ta young laird? Come in, shentlemans, her nainsel is glad to see ye baith. Ta porridge is shust ready, and ta fresh feesh, and ta goot whiskey—ta real, right thing, shentlemen.”

In a few moments the visitors had laid aside their bonnets, and their porridge was before them.

“Is it ta whiskey or ta cow’s milk ye’ll be wanting wi’ your meal?” asked Donald of the lawyer.

“I’ll just tak’ them baith, Donald,” said Fraser.

Donald was not regarded as any hinderance to a confidential conversation, and when the porridge had taken the edge off their hunger, and while they sat waiting for the trout broiling on the embers at their feet, Fraser said,

“I hae sure information that thae Perth bodies hae sent aff the writ and constables, anent that bill the laird gave, and willna talk about paying.”

Hector laughed, but not very pleasantly. “Well,” he said, “what can they do?”

“They can take the laird away bodily, and clap him within four stone walls, that’s what they can do—if they are not hindered.”

“How can we hinder them, then?”

“No ways but by paying the money. Four hundred pounds sterling! Hector, lad, it is a big sum.”

“Her nainsel wadna pay a penny o’ it. Turn ta craters free in ta Reay forest, and let them fint their ways hame to Perth again. It will pe a lang time ere they win there—yes, inteet!”

“Hout, Donald! That’s fair nonsense.”

“Gie them ta whole Reay forest. That wad pe vera ceevil.”

“Senselessly ceevil. The money is due, and the money must be paid. Folk canna eat their cake and hae it too; Hector kens that as weel as I do.”

“How can we raise the money?”

“That is warld-like talk. It is raised, I brought it wi’ me. But MacAllister gat into a raging temper every time I spoke of paying it. Donald must get him awa to the Reay forest—there

are reasons enough besides the timber, and cattle; and Hector, you must go off somewhere with that red-hot brother o' yours, or he'll be sure to put a quarrelsome finger in the pie. Then if I am left myself to manage thae limbs of the law, we'll neither kill each ither nor burn the house about our heads."

Hector's foot was patting the floor in a very irritable manner, and the frown on his handsome face was a dark one.

"It is a just debt, Hector, and a just debt ought to be paid."

"I know that; it is the making of these debts. Don't you see they are ruining the estate? How can they be prevented?"

"I have thought o' that, and we'll speak o' the matter anon. To-night you had better go to Strathleven and do what you may do to get the laird out o' harm's way. It is true that if we pay the debt they canna touch him, but the Laird o' MacAllister isna always laird o' himsel', and his dirk is whiles far too near his hand."

There seemed to be no better thing to do, and after some further reasoning with Donald Du—who refused to see any claim superior to MacAllister's in the MacAllister's country—Hector went thoughtfully home. Every year he was becoming more painfully conscious that they were living out of time and tune with the great world outside them. Travel and a liberal education had convinced him long ago that a noble estate was being recklessly wasted in an endeavor to avoid dangers that sooner or later were inevitable.

To-night he blamed himself severely, perhaps more so than he deserved, for it was no light task that presented itself to him as a duty. Indeed, it was a task from which an affectionate son might well shrink, since any plan of his for economizing or improving the MacAllister lands must necessarily seem selfish to those in the present enjoyment of them. His father might suspect that he was looking towards the time when he himself would be chief of the MacAllisters, and he knew that his brother Angus would keenly resent any curtailment of the ancient glories or privileges of the clan.

And Angus was very dear to Hector. In his great love for the lad he threw a heroic glamour over all the wild deeds rumor ascribed to him. It was easy also to make excuses for Angus; he had never been beyond his native mountains; his world was Caithness and Sutherland. Outside their boundaries London to Labrador seemed equally remote from his interests and sympathies.

Of course his education had been faulty, but Hector was not to blame for that. He had often tried to persuade Angus to go southward and enter some famous school, but from childhood the lad had loved a sword better than a book. His mother dying at his birth under very sorrowful circumstances, he had been wholly left to the unreasoning affection of men and women who had taught him mainly two things—the use of weapons and the superiority of the MacAllisters.

So, to Angus, the world revolved in the MacAllister country, and the laird of the clan saw in this son his own wild, heroic youth, and loved him for the backward vision. How then was Hector to make clear to them the necessity for turning their swords into ploughshares without laying himself open to suspicions he could not bear to contemplate?

Busy with such thoughts as these—thoughts in which Angus was somehow always first and last—he lifted his eyes as he felt the soft lawn of the castle court beneath his feet, and saw Angus coming to meet him. Angus was a tall, dark youth in kilt and philibeg, with a face more serious than Hector's, and a stature that in the evening dusk looked almost gigantic. Nor did his appearance belie his real strength; the dirk in his belt had been won in fair and open contest from Grant of Grant, and the feather in his bonnet plucked by his own hand from the wing of an eagle in the dark fastnesses of Ben More.

Yet, unreasonable as Angus frequently was with all others, to Hector he always listened with loving patience; and now, as he joined him in the court, he said, eagerly, "Hector, I have waited from my bed to see thee. Two things have gone wrong with me to-day, I have quarrelled with Ewen, and our father is sair

troubled about something. The world is turning withershins, I think."

"Our father has good reasons for trouble, Angus. Come here;" and the two young men leaned together over the wall which guarded the court, and from which the hill went down on three sides in a sheer precipice of five hundred feet. "To-morrow there will be men here who, unless he pays them four hundred pounds, will carry him to Perth and put him in prison."

"You are talking foolishness, Hector; they dare do no such thing!"

"Angus, dear lad, get quickly rid of such dreams. Outside our own land the world cares no more for the chief of MacAllister than it does for the chief of the gypsy camp down at Duchally."

"What is to be done?"

"The money is to be paid."

"Where is it to be got?"

"It is got. Fraser has it, but our father will not hear of paying it. Now it must be done, and it may as well be done quietly. So I trust to you and Donald; you must take the laird away on some pretext to the Reay forest."

"When will these men be here?"

"I think to-morrow. Fraser heard of them at Tain, and came on as quickly as possible; but it is a bad road for those strange to it."

"Perhaps they will take the northern pass."

"They are sure to do that; indeed, Fraser had certain tidings of them at Strathdonan yesterday. You will give your word with mine, Angus, and keep our father beyond trouble for a few days."

"Surely, Hector. A man can only walk as his shoes will let him; and if we cannot fight a wrong, why I suppose we must bear it."

"Come inside now, Angus, it is getting late."

"No, no, there is more for me to do yet. I must see Ewen

before I go in; it is ill sleeping with a drawn dirk between us."

"Oh, Angus, you are the noblest lad! and now I am free to say that you owe it to Ewen. He is your foster-father, and three times your age, and he loves you almost as well as I do."

"All that may be, and yet Ewen may be wrong and I right; but I must needs see him, so good-night, Hector, and trouble not yourself about the day and the folks you never saw, for all the men in Scotland can do no more than they may do."

So Hector went into the castle to talk over affairs with his father, and Angus took the road down the mountain. There was no moon, but daylight lingers long in that latitude, and the solemn gray stillness was only intensified by the whispering of the pines and the soft plashing of the linn down the rocky defile at his right hand.

Ewen sat at the door of his cottage, and he must have been deeply hurt by their dispute, for he never noticed his favorite's approach. For a moment Angus stood silently over him, then he touched him gently and said, "Ewen, Ewen, there is nothing for misdeeds but amends; I did you wrong, my father! I am sorry."

In an instant the old man was pouring out in a torrent of Gaelic his love, his sorrow, and his utter devotion to his young chief, and the quarrel ended, as many a quarrel between them had done before, in their weeping upon each other's necks.

"And now we shall drink the peace-cup, Ewen, for I have something particular to tell you."

They talked earnestly, and yet cheerfully, until after midnight, and then Angus did not return to Strathleven, but lay down in Ewen's cottage upon a pallet of fresh brackens. Ewen stood some time afterwards in the open door, holding an argument with himself. But at last he seemed to be perfectly satisfied, for, as he lay down, he muttered: "It is petter ta keep ta deil out than to hae to put him out; aye, is it."

In the meantime Fraser was sleeplessly watching out the night in Donald Du's cottage. He missed sorely the comfort

of his own feather bed, and the little bachelor luxuries with which he had surrounded himself.

"It's a born fool I am to be putting mysel' in danger o' the rheumatics for a man bound to go to ruin ony way ; and here's a mist thick enou' to wet a Hielandman to the skin, no' to speak o' their hot tempers and their hasty hands. I'll e'en win my way hame again as cannily as I can, and let what will be will be."

But as soon as the sun rose and filled the valley with sunshine Fraser felt more like himself. "Oh, how sweet and fresh is this caller air," he said, joyfully, "and the mavis singing on every tree, and the lark awa' up in the lift, and the gowans and bluebells glinting all over the strath. It wad be baith a sin and a shame no to try and keep the land thegither for that braw lad, Hector, for he is warld-like and sensible, so I'll e'en awa up to Strathleven Castle, and see which way the wind sits in MacAllister's temper this morning."

He found Donald Du already dressed, and eating his porridge and whiskey in something of a hurry.

"Ta laird was going to Strathoikel to see and hear tell o' ta Ross men, and she'll na move a step at a' without her nainsel," he explained.

Hearing this, Fraser at once began the ascent to the castle, for he well knew that even giving himself half the distance as a start, Donald's mighty steps would be likely to leave him behind. He found the hall of the castle in the greatest confusion. Gillies were running hither and thither, buckling garters and belts, packing baskets with oatcakes and Farintosh, or attempting to execute a score of orders which the chief thought of at the last moment.

There was a strange and perplexing hubbub, made up of Gaelic and English cries, of shrill calls and whistles, of laughter and angry disputing, and Fraser, seeing how impossible any reasonable conversation was, determined to ignore the quarrel of the preceding night.

Of course he expected the laird to be equally conciliating, but that was a step quite beyond the MacAllister's nature.

"Come in, Fraser," he said, with a lofty condescension, "come in; you are welcome, though you did set yoursel' up in a blaze yestreen."

"What's in the wind this morning, laird?"

"As if ye didna ken weel enough, Andrew Fraser! There's some o' your ain craft coming o'er the hills to tak' me—*me, mind ye!*—awa' to prison. Heard ye ever the like? And a' for a miserable screed of a goose-feather!"

"Weel, laird, I'll do a' that may be to settle the matter."

"But ye'll pay no siller, Andrew Fraser, not a bawbee. Why should I? I never saw the color o' their Perth money, not I."

"But, laird, it was paid on your ain hand-write to Dalraid & Dounachy for the linsey and tartans I sent you last November."

"I tell ye I never saw a bawbee o' it. I ken not if there be such bodies as Dalraid & Dounachy. Now what for should I pay back siller I never saw?"

"But the tartans, laird?"

"Umff! Thae Perth craters ought to be thankfu' that a few yards o' tartan is all their loss. My father, the gude Laird Alexander, would hae gane wi' five hundred men, and just taen a' the tartan he needed, maybe other little matters besides."

"Then if I am not to pay the siller, laird, what am I to do?"

"One lawyer ought to ken how to fleece another. It would ill become me, Laird Hector MacAllister, to hae any hobble-shaw anent such matters as wabster's and tailor's bills. Lawyer against lawyer, it will be a proper wrastle, that it will, and dinna you be the one to gie in first."

"And where are you going, laird?"

"It isna quite determined on yet; but I'll be somewhere in the Edderkyles deer forest. They will be brave men that follow me there without a guide, and they will be rich men that can hire a guide in the MacAllister's land. Ane o' them bonnie-looking bogs, not twenty feet wide, wouldna mak a mout-

fu' o' the Court o' Session and the London Parliament, wi' all the lawyers on King Geordie's rolls thrown into the bargain. Gude-morning to you, Fraser, there's Hector to stand beside ye, and whatever Hector puts his hand to, I'll say 'Yes' to it. There's my thumb on that promise."

So at the last Fraser had got what he desired, for he understood that this was simply the laird's way of accepting the thing he knew to be inevitable.

"And he must just hae his little bluster if it soothes his pride a bit," said Fraser, apologetically, as he watched the laird and his following disappear among the dark woods of Loch Mora. "Paying debts is a hard lesson to learn, if ye dinna start it till ye are mair than saxty years auld."

CHAPTER II.

THE CHIEF'S TRIUMPH.

“Often do the spirits
Of great events stride on before the events,
And in to-day already walks to-morrow.”

“Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt.”

“COME in now, Fraser, and have your breakfast; my father has gone away as happy as a child on a holiday.”

Fraser turned in gladly enough; a breakfast with Hector meant an orderly, if not a luxurious meal, and when they entered the little parlor where it was laid he could not help a sigh of content and pleasant anticipation. “Ham and corned beef and pies, and kippered salmon and tongue and eggs, and fresh butter and thick cream and marmalade! Certes, Hector, a good breakfast, and a good appetite, the cause is excellent, lad, and the word is ‘fall to.’”

The order was heartily obeyed, so heartily that it was not until Fraser pushed aside the dish of lordly salmon that he found time to say: “I have not seen Angus this morning; I hope he has taken the same road as the laird.”

“I think he has. He slept at Ewen's last night, and Ewen and he were here at dawning. I heard them say they would meet the laird at the hunting-lodge in the Edderkyle.”

“That is well. I was mair feared for Angus than for his father; the lad has a double portion o' the MacAllister's temper.”

“I wonder what is best to do for him?”

“There is nae remedy for temper but in cutting aff the head—unless, maybe, marriage. I hae heard that a wife wad tame the sea, and ye could find one for it.” And the old bachelor

laughed queerly as he added: "For mysel' I wald rather thole the disease than the cure for it. But if a wife wad sort Angus's temper, then I ken the very lassie he should wed."

"Helen MacDonald?"

"Na, na, it is just bonnie Grace Cameron. Why, Hector, she is a kind o' Providence for the MacAllister. Look here, my lad"—and Fraser bent eagerly forward—"Assynt and Balkerry touch the Edderkyle on the north, and lay easy all along the MacAllister country on the east. They hae bonnie lochs and bays for herring-fishing, and they hae rich marble quarries, and wealth o' garnets and pebble-stanes. It is a natural bit o' your estate, and the lassie is gude and bonnie. Why should we not mak' a wedding o' it?"

"But Angus might not love her, and I would never advise him to marry any woman unless he did love her."

"That is a' clavers, Hector MacAllister, as it is said,

" 'There's plenty good love in bands and bags,
And siller and gold is a sweet complexion.' "

Ah! I mind auld Bailie MacPherson, that was a song o' his, and he heeded it too, for he married wi' a rich widow—Jessie, relict o' Gavin Fraser; she was my ain cousin by marriage sax times removed—all of which is neither here nor there, for I was speaking o' a marriage atween the lands o' MacAllister and Cameron."

"Well, speak no more on such a matter, Fraser; I would rather lose every acre I am to have than see Angus sell himself for more."

"It's no' a bad price for any lad—Assynt and Balkerry."

"It is too little for Angus—I believe I saw this Miss Cameron in Edinburgh."

"That did you not, sir! It is four years syne you were in Edinburgh, and Grace Cameron is just seventeen last April, the saxteenth day. I ken that, for she spent her birthday in my poor bit home."

"Oh, oh! your poor bit home! You know it is the pret-

tiest place in Dornoch. But what was Miss Cameron doing in your 'poor bit home?' "

"Gude reason for her visit, Hector. I did the conveyancing and writing wark for the selling and buying of Assynt, and the inn was dirty and noisy, and so I e'en asked John Cameron and his daughter to stop at my house. It was an unca' pleasant thing to see her makin' out the tea in my parlor morn and night; and when she went awa' I missed her sairly for a while."

"Then you know Miss Cameron?"

"Yes. When you ha' lived three weeks in the same house wi' a lassie you may kind o' say 'you know her'—not but what a fifteenth-century deed is easier reading than maist o' them."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Bonnie as flowers in May; dainty-like and high-bred. She ay minded me o' sweet dewy roses and caller air."

"What color is her hair?"

"I canna rightly say, but it is ay snooded prettily; and she has eyes like blue forget-me-nots—clear, open eyes, laddie, that look you straight in the face."

"She might be a proper wife for Angus. It often grieves me to think I shall have all this estate, and Angus nothing at all. It is a bad law."

"Speak o' what you understand, Hector, and then you will-na speak against the law. There wouldna be a decent estate in Scotland but for it."

"It is no fault of Angus's that he is youngest, and he is not fit for any life but the one he is leading. Now if he could be induced to fall in love with Miss Cameron, she could not help but love him, I think, and then—don't you see, Fraser?"

"Yes, I see. But *wha* or *what* is going to induce Angus MacAllister to do aught he is wanted to do? He is just the maist contrary o' lads."

"Forbid him to love her or tell him some one else wants her, and Angus will swim Loch Assynt every night to see her."

In conversation appertaining to this matter the breakfast hour passed, and then Fraser and Hector had other important topics to discuss, for the lawyer had much to say against the way in which MacAllister lived; he wanted the clansmen to be released from all feudal obligations, to turn their attention to fishing and cattle, so that in a few years they would be able to support themselves.

“The expense would be great at first, Hector, but the Mac-Gunns—the maist unruly o’ mortals—want to go to Canada; and if your father will sell the land they are on he will be clear in ten years, and have a’ the North Country banks courting his business.”

“The MacAllister will never consent.”

“But, lad, the MacAllisters canna hold the warld in their bridle. And look here;” then eagerly the lawyer spread out the maps and estimates and showed how this land could be made to raise black cattle, and that land sheep, and the forest and lochs be great game and fishing preserves, until Hector was astounded with the probable profits of such a scheme. Thus the long summer day passed without scarcely a thought of the visitors for whom they were waiting. But when night came, and there was still no sign of them, they began to speculate as to the causes of their delay.

These speculations were tinged with anxiety when at the end of the second day there was still no sign of them. On the third day Hector sent scouts to inspect the road and various mountain passes, but they came back without any positive information. They indeed met one man who had spoken with the party among the hills that guard Loch Shin, but beyond them they had not left a footmark.

On the evening of the fourth day Fraser came in from a ramble with a gloomy and perplexed face. “Hector,” he said, “I hae just met wi’ twa men who hae na been in this country since the year Angus was born. I don’t know on what terms the laird and they parted, but it was either as sworn friends or sworn foes, there could be naething atween the twa for them;

and I think, if you will gie me a guide, I will go to the Edderkyle to-morrow and hae speech with the laird."

"You will find it a rough journey. Can I go for you?"

"I can tread your father's steps up hill or down dale, and if the laird hasna told you anent this matter, I would ill like to be the man who should speak, without leave, of affairs sae private to him. How auld were you when Angus was born?"

"I was full seven years old."

"Do you remember your mother?"

"I remember her in a hundred ways, but best of all the last time I saw her. Angus was two days old then, and she called me to her side and made me hold his baby hands and promise her that I would always be a good, loving, patient brother to him. I have kept my promise, Fraser."

"You have. She was a bonnie woman."

"The loveliest woman I ever saw."

"And the laird loved her?"

"I have never seen him weep but at her death. No other woman I am sure has ever taken her place, and her room has never been unlocked, to my knowledge, since she was carried out of it."

"Then, Hector, it is plain I must go mysel'. Friends or foes, it is as well that MacAllister should hae his wits about him when he sees these men first."

"We are a troublesome family to you, Fraser. I declare, it passes me to tell why you take so much interest in our fortunes. I am sure the money you get hardly pays your expenses."

"I tak' my lawfu' commission always in the way o' business; but there is mair than business here; I am paying aff an auld debt, lad, and I like to pay it. Do you want to ken how much I owe the MacAllisters?"

Hector smiled disbelievingly and nodded his head.

"I'll tell you, laddie. The Frasers—as the whole world kens o' them—have aye been daft anent the unlucky Stuarts. They 'flung up their bonnets wi' bonnie Dundee,' and my ain father

fought wi' him at the pass o' Killecrankie. Then when he was hunted all through these hills for fighting for the king he liked best, the Laird Alexander MacAllister hid him, and fed him, and got him safe awa' to France; though he himself was in trouble anent the same matter. That was nae lesson to *me*, for when the Chevalier cam' o'er the water I sided wi' the Stuarts again, and your father and I fought side by side at Sheriffmuir. For that folly I owe him my life twice over; he saved me on the battle-field, and afterwards he made a certain grand kinsman o' his save me from the hanging at Carlisle gate. Sae ye see I hae a long score to pay aff, Hector, and I like to pay it."

The next morning Fraser set out with a convoy of six men to seek the laird in the Edderkyles, and Hector was conscious of a very unpleasant anxiety and restlessness all day. It was also exceedingly sultry, and in the gloaming, when he had given up all hope of his visitors, he was no longer able to resist the temptation to walk outside the castle court. There was a little plateau one hundred feet down the mountain; it was thickly planted with pines on one side, but on the other it was free and open, and standing there one could overlook the whole strath.

It was the sweetest hour of the gloaming, the evening crimson hung over the mountains like a royal mantle, the curlews' wild bravura echoed from the fells, and the craik of the rail came faintly up from the valley. The bat and the heavy moths and the musing owl were abroad, but for any other life Hector believed himself to be quite alone.

Suddenly he became intensely conscious of companionship, the companionship of a human soul. He stood up and looked carefully around, but though he was convinced of this impression, however inexplicable such a sensation is, he kept a sharp lookout, for he knew not whether it might be friend or foe.

The wood was growing dark; if he had an enemy to meet he preferred doing so where at least he would not be in danger of an assassin's blow. So he turned towards the castle, and then in the clearer light he saw a figure leaning against a large

fir-tree. He saw it to be a woman's figure, slight and young. She turned and faced him as he approached, gazing steadily at him; and if she had been watching him in the wood with those great, lustrous dark eyes, there was no wonder that Hector had been troubled by their eager questioning. In the dim light they shone like lamps, and compelled him to stand before her quite fascinated by their gaze.

He never thought of her dress, he saw only the slight, graceful figure, and the pale, oval face lit by those wonderful eyes. For a moment they looked silently at each other, then Hector's native gentlemanhood asserted itself. He doffed his bonnet and said, "I am afraid you have lost your way. Can I be of service to you?"

"I have not lost my way, sir."

"There is not a MacAllister that would hurt a lady on their own hills, but the night grows late, and I have heard of strangers around. Can I see you safely to your friends?"

"Can you tell me where I can have speech with the young Laird of MacAllister?"

"I am he."

"How shall I know that?"

"I have said so. I would not lie to you."

"Then listen. Your brother Angus has done a very foolish thing, and may be in great danger from it. I know not; but you have a lawyer with you, ask him. It is thus, and so. Two days ago he and his companions met some men coming to Strathleven. They beguiled them away to the caves of Logan, and while the men were in a drunken sleep took from them their papers and left them to find their way home again. If they get over Logan bogs they will be in Perth within two or three days. That is all."

"One moment stay. When shall I see you again?"

"If you need any help to save Angus MacAllister from trouble, fasten the ribbon from your bonnet to this tree. I will meet you here as soon after as may be."

"Before you go tell me what I must call you?"

“There is no need to name me; we may possibly never meet again.”

Then she waved her hand in a way Hector felt himself bound to respect, and glided rapidly into the wood. He went towards home greatly troubled. If only Fraser had been at Strathleven! It was indeed evident that he must follow him as soon as possible. Full of this determination he approached the castle, and was astonished to find it the scene of unusual bustle. Lights were in many rooms, servants hurrying to and fro, and as he neared the court he heard his father's voice in a more than ordinary exultant tone. Angus was with him, Angus and Fraser both; and on every face but that of the old lawyer there were marks of triumphant satisfaction.

When Hector entered, the laird began over again the tale he was telling his clansman—the tale of “six limbs o’ the law” who had been beguiled by Angus and Ewen. Amid roars of laughter he described the struggles of the “city loons” through the Lachy Moss, and over the Nob of Kerrycan, and ankle-deep in the sands of Winn Ness. “And here’s the papers, my pretty men, that were to clap your chief atween four stane walls. Now what will I do wi’ them?”

“Burn them, MacAllister, burn them, and I’ll tune up my chanter, and we’ll hae a strathspey to the bleeze o’ them,” cried the clan piper, and so, in spite of Hector and Fraser’s appeals to be heard, the papers were flung on the red-hot peats, while Roy MacAllister, piper and gentleman, blew out the wildest stave of the wildest dance music in the whole world.

The laird himself led off the measure with his stately younger son, the piper striding up and down the hall, and stirring to a kind of frenzy the yet half-wild blood of the “wild MacAllisters.” The dancing, enthusiastic as it was, was soon further stimulated by shrill cries and loud snappings of the fingers. The excitement soon became intoxicating. Hector found himself unable to resist it. He took his brother by the hand, the old laird bowed to Fraser, the lawyer stepped boldly out, and to the cheers of the clansmen and the delirious notes of “Lady

Flora Macdonald" they danced that night a wonderful four-some reel.

Of course, when the night's revelry was over and the morning brought reflection, Fraser was full of regrets for his weakness. "I dinna ken whatever cam o'er me," he said, penitently, to Hector, "but when I saw MacAllister stepping sae stately east and west, and smiling sae happily, and holding out his hand sae heartily, the auld spirit took clean possession o' me, and I wad hae danced if I had danced my head aff—mair shame to a graybeard like me."

"You danced well, Fraser; not even Angus had a finer spring than you had, or a more graceful step. Every one thought it wonderful in you."

"Yes," said the old fellow, more than half-pleased, "I was aye noticed in my young days for my neat foot and leg. I dinna think they dance as weel now as they did thirty years syne. But, Hector, that's enou' and mair than enou' o' this foolishness. What is to be done now anent thae bills and papers?"

"Let sleeping dogs lie, Fraser. Maybe they won't trouble us again in that fashion. Father and Angus are so proud and happy; let us hope for the best."

"A vera pretty slogan, lad, but wha is to pay the piper that plays it? When you speak that way, ye have not thought o' the charges now hanging o'er the heads o' Angus and Ewen."

"What charges?"

"Just highway robbery, and no less; besides the crime o' hindering and obstructing the king's messengers on the king's highway. They wad hae made an act o' treason not many years syne, and it will be an affair o' the hulks or the plantations if it comes to trial. I'm doubting we are all in a bad box."

"Oh, Fraser, whatever must be done?"

"I must e'en gae my ways to Perth as fast as four legs can carry me, and see if the money and the expenses and a gude bit o' humble pie will put things right. Angus must be got

out o' the way till there is a dead surety on the condonation. It is a meeserable ending o' all the hurly-burly o' last night, but I hae seen whole towns lose their senses in the same way—fire cannons, ring bells, light bonfires, and then wake up and find they had only been dreaming o' victory."

"Fraser, let me go with you to Perth. I ought to eat my own share of this humble pie, and I should be sorry."

"Never be sorry, Hector. To speak in your ear, lad, I wouldna hae missed last night for half my bank-book. I was young again for just five hours—I was young again. I have not steppet in yonder reel since the night I danced it wi' bonnie Bessie Ballantyne, when the great Duke o' Gordon opened the ball o' the clans at Inverness. But put your bonnet on your head and walk beside my powny a mile or twa, I hae mair to talk about than bonnie lasses and foursome reels."

CHAPTER III.

ASSYNT AND GRACE CAMERON.

“The light of love, the purity of grace,
The mind, the music breathing from her face,
The heart whose softness harmonized the whole.”

AFTER the feast comes the reckoning, and, unfortunately, none of the revellers in this case had calculated beforehand the cost of their entertainment. Fraser was counting it, with a very grim face, as he and Hector went silently down the mountain. But by the time they had reached the strath, and could converse, he had accepted the bill, and made up his mind to pay it as cheerfully as possible.

“Onyway, we had a gran’ time yestreen, Hector,” he said, with a suppressed chuckle, “and I’m no grudging the payment of it—just ance in a lifetime. If Deacon Davie Strang could hae seen me! He wad ca’ a kirk session, if, indeed, he believed his ain een!”

“Yes, we had a grand time, Fraser; and when Allister played ‘Carle now the king’s come!’ I could scarcely keep my dirk in my belt.”

“A’ of us forgot we were sworn Whiggers. I am glad the Stuarts are o’er the water; but what if they should come back, Hector?”

“We should e’en pin on the white cockade and cry ‘Claymore!’ for Charlie!”

“But why are we talking in this daftlike way? It is anent money and sheriff’s doings we ought to be caring this morning, for, to tell you the truth, I dinna see our way clearly out of this writ-burning business.”

"But you can go and pay the bill, and you need not know anything about the burning."

"I'm no the lad to tell on mysel', and they'll hae to prove the personality o' Angus and Ewen, and to do that they'll hae to put eyes on them again. There are few laws Andrew Fraser canna find a way through; but I'm feared, I'm feared, Hector lad, that there is no way to avoid expenses. Just bills I'm aye for paying, but expenses on them is anither kind o' thing. However, I shall do my best, and you must speak wi' the laird about thae MacGunns and their land."

"They want really to go to Canada?"

"'Deed do they. They are daft to go. There is naebody to fight wi' here now, and they hae heard tell o' the big woods full o' game and Indians. It's the Indians that pleases them, nae doubt o' that. There will be some braw fights atween them, if they only get there."

"And the Sinclairs will buy the land from us?"

"That will they, and glad to do it; they are 'getting folk,' thae Sinclairs."

"And with this money you propose—"

"To send the MacGunns where they want to go, and help the MacAllisters to start as drovers and fishers. Why does your father want a big 'tail' after him now? He cannot take eight hundred men and go into Moray's land or Argyle's land, and drive hame cattle and wheat for them in these times. He can't pick a quarrel now wi' a neighbor that has aught he wants, and then go and harry him out o' it. Thae days are gane forever. The men themsel's are tired of doing nothing, and having nothing they'll be glad to pick up their own living, and you'll gie them a start."

"I will say all this to my father, perhaps he may listen."

"Whiles he will listen, and then whiles he won't listen, but keep aye at it. Facts are stubborn things, and they will win a hearing, sooner or later. Now you may gang back; my pony has warmed to his work, and I'll mak him show his best shoes to-day."

“You will send us word as soon as possible?”

“You will hear from me afore long, and my advice is, till you do so, keep Angus where he can neither be seen nor heard of.”

How to do this thing was now the subject of Hector's anxious deliberation, as he took the homeward road again. There was no use in trying to alarm Angus; danger of any kind had an irresistible charm to the lad, and he was so contrary that it was impossible to tell whether he would oppose or accept any proposition. Naturally, Hector's thoughts reverted to the strange woman, who, on the previous evening, had spoken so confidently of helping Angus if he were in danger. Obviously, it would be wise to apply to her, and Hector rather liked the alternative; for she was wondrously lovely, and he quite lost the thread of his thoughts as he tried to recall the clear, pale, oval face, and the clear, dark eyes lighting it up.

Just at this point in his reverie he reached the little plateau where he had seen her, and there, to his amazement, he found his father, who was walking under the trees with two strange men, and Angus, who was sitting on the grass, beside the very woman whose beauty he had been dreaming about.

For a moment he thought of avoiding the party, but Hector's nature was thoroughly straightforward, and, finding no good reason for such a course, he went forward to meet the laird. There was a soft and pleasant expression on his face, and he was talking almost confidentially to the men who walked one on each side of him. They were men of very unusual appearance, and Hector did not wonder that Fraser should remember them for more than twenty years, and feel anxious as to their good or bad feelings towards the MacAllister.

They were not gentlemen in the ordinary sense of the word, but they wore good clothes, and had that unmistakable air of being quite at ease about money which can never be assumed nor mistaken. Their whole appearance was rather that of foreigners: no Scot or Englishman ever had such flashing eyes,

such lithe forms, such bronze skins. Their manners also had the perfect freedom and ease and indifference of men who "serve not."

For a moment the laird looked slightly embarrassed by Hector's approach, but only for a moment. "This is my eldest son, Laird Hector," he said, proudly; "and, Hector, these gentlemen are two very dear and near friends of mine—Jasper and Carruple Gordon."

Both men raised their bonnets courteously to Hector, and one of them answered, with a knowing smile, "I have seen young MacAllister before, and he will remember me if he will think of the Grassmarket in Edinburgh."

"Why, yes, certainly; you are the—the—"

"The gypsy who prevented you throwing away two hundred pounds on a worthless horse."

"And who sold me 'Roderick'!"

The man nodded pleasantly as he said, "A fine horse, laird. Such a one to bend his knees and tuck his haunches in! He has an eye like a hawk and a foot like a stag! Bone, blood, wind, speed, bottom, and can jump everything right and left? will you sell him again?"

"Not for gold."

"Good! Never keep a horse you don't like, and never part with one that suits you."

"Will you come up to the castle and see him again?"

"No; I won't trust myself. I should want him if I saw him. You may happen to trust a cat with cream, but never trust the Romany lad with a fine horse."

Then Carruple Gordon and MacAllister joined them, and the latter said, rather wearily, "Come, Hector, let us back to Strathleven. I am not used to dancing all night, and our friends are going to the camp of their people at Duchally."

Hector was very anxious that Angus should accompany them, for he wished to talk with him regarding the position he was in and the penalties he had incurred; but Angus insisted on remaining with his new-found friends, and there was something

so charmingly wilful about the handsome youth that, as usual, he was permitted to follow his inclinations. The laird, indeed, looked dubiously at him, for it was easy to see that Angus was thoroughly under the spell of the beautiful Isabel Gordon; but almost immediately his face softened, and with a sigh he turned away and walked thoughtfully up the mountain.

Towards the top of the ascent he leaned heavily on his son's shoulder, and said he was tired. "I hae had a hard week, Hector, what wi' knocking about the forest, leaping bogs, and climbing hills, no to speak o' the anger, and the anxiety, and the dancing last night. Then the meeting o' this morning! It's the heart holds up the body, lad, and my heart is wearifu' and sorrowfu' this morning."

"If it is this Perth business, father—"

"It is nothing of the sort, son Hector. Do you think I would let the tear fall for a' the men-folk in Scotland?"

And Hector saw with surprise and concern that his father's clear blue eyes were heavy with tears that he found it impossible to repress.

A woman might then have said those gentle, cooing, comforting words which men love to listen to from them; but Hector could not offer sympathy of this kind. He only leaned silently over the castle wall beside his father, and waited with a watchful patience for the first opportunity to fall into whatever mood the laird himself would choose.

And he was too impulsive to be long silent, though his first words were a sort of apology. "It is long, long since I buried this sorrow," he said, "and I never thought to weep about it again; but the sight o' yonder men and of that bonnie lassie—did you notice her, Hector?"

"I did, father."

"Who does she put you in mind of?"

"My mother."

"But she is not half so beautiful as your mother was. Come wi' me, son Hector, and I'll prove that to you."

So Hector followed his father up the wide oaken stairs of

the castle to the closed door, that had been from his bairnhood such a gate of tears and love and pity to him. Possibly the laird had passed beyond it much more frequently than his household suspected, for the key turned easily, and there was little of that forlorn, deathlike atmosphere which always clings to rooms absolutely closed and deserted.

He turned back the shutters, and the pleasant sunshine flooded the pretty chamber. That nameless charm which a woman's clothing and pretty trifles give to any apartment was the special interest of this room. A robe of changeable silk lay across a chair, a pair of tiny scarlet slippers stood at the foot of the bed, ribbons, a satin kerchief, a bit of needlework, some jewelry, and a pair of gloves were the first objects Hector saw on entering the room.

Its main treasure was, however, a fine picture, a picture of a dense forest scene, and a beautiful woman standing clearly out from its green depths. The face was well remembered by Hector. It had bent to kiss him often; and those small, shapely hands! he almost felt again their light, caressing, lingering touch. Both men looked at it silently; there seemed to be no words fitting until tears had washed away the silent reserve of years.

"You are a man now, Hector, and maybe you can understand how dearly I loved that woman?"

"I think I can father. I am sure I loved her. I can remember yet how I wept after she left us. I have never forgotten my mother. I have seen no other woman half so good and beautiful."

"And yet she was not your mother, Hector, though she loved you, and did well a mother's part by you."

"Ah, dear father, do not tell me that. You rob me of the sweetest memory I have."

"Nay, nay, you may keep the memory, you knew no other mother, for the one who gave you birth died ere you could know her. She was a Gordon also, Hector, but no a gypsy Gordon. She was a gran' lady, ain sister to the duke, and folks said

the MacAllister did a great thing when he won her. Bonnie and good she was, and I loved her—after a kind.

“But we were not long married ere she died, and some matters about her dowry took me the next summer to see her kin at Gordon Castle. One day something happened that made me angry enough wi’ my brother-in-law, and maybe I was in one of my vera warst tempers riding that night through Gordon woods.

“When I came to a certain place in the road my horse wouldna pass it. There was nothing that I could see or hear to cause his terror, and, after trying words in vain, I struck him blindly and madly. Suddenly some one seized my arm, and in eager, passionate tones said, ‘Do not strike the poor creature because he sees, where you are blind!’

“Before I could speak or rally from my amazement, I saw the loveliest woman standing by the trembling brute’s head, soothing and talking to him. What she said I could not understand, but she stroked and petted him until I declare to you, Hector, I believe he was sobbing like a child. Queer words they were, but the horse understood them, and I knew after that they were in the Romany tongue.

“I was that ashamed o’ myself, and that astonished at the girl’s beauty, that I submitted to her directions at once, and took the creature home another way. That was the beginning, Hector, and she soon loved me so well that she gave up her own life and people and I made her my wife. She was not clever, nor rich, nor a born lady, but she was a sweet, loving woman, and her smile, or her touch, or just the rustle of her gown, was a happiness to me.”

“And the men you were talking with to-day were her brothers?”

“They were her brothers.”

“And Isabel?”

“Is Carruple Gordon’s daughter.”

“Our own cousin?”

“She is cousin to Angus. Now you see how the dear lad comes by his wild, reckless, roving nature.”

“And his great beauty also.”

“Yes, beauty is his birthright.”

“Suppose he should fall in love with Isabel, what then, my father?”

“He must marry her. *We* needna look to marriage to noble us. *We* may wed wherever our hearts list; the MacAllisters are great enough to lift the lass they love to their own level. Angus’s mother had noble Romany blood in her veins; they thought it as good as Highland blood; I would like to hear any one say it isn’t. The Gordon’s didna approve o’ me taking her to wife in place o’ a lady o’ their ain great house, and we had words about it, but there was never a Gordon o’ them that should tell the Chief o’ MacAllister what woman he should marry.”

“Father, you have spoken of this matter in a good time, for I have something to say to you about the lad so dear to both of us.”

Then Hector went carefully over the fears of Fraser regarding the position in which Angus had placed himself by his high-handed contempt of the law; and finding the laird easily alarmed, and disposed to be anxious about his younger son, he gradually led the conversation to the advantages of a union between Angus and Grace Cameron.

But the laird did not look at the matter as Hector did. “Angus,” he said, “would, indeed, have no land and but little money, but he could live by his sword, as many a man of his race had done; and as for marrying the girl he didna like for her tocher, or leaving the one he did like because she had no tocher, that was a thing the MacAllisters had never done, and never would do, please the Power above them all.”

Upon the whole, the conversation was not satisfactory as it regarded Angus, nor in any subsequent one was Hector able greatly to influence his father, either in respect to his brother or the clansmen. The laird was very averse to meeting trouble, and he thought that when he heard from Fraser it would be time enough to take so distasteful a subject into consideration.

And day after day passed and there was no word. Angus was dreaming them away in the little camp in the fir wood, or else he was absent on short, mysterious journeys with one or other of his gypsy uncles, and it was evident that he was completely under the spell of Isabel Gordon's great beauty.

At length, in the warm days of August, a messenger came from Fraser with very perplexing news. He had hitherto failed in staying the civil process already commenced against the chief of the MacAllister clan, and a warrant had been issued for the arrest of Laird Angus MacAllister and of Ewen MacAllister as the suspected perpetrators of the robbery and outrage on the king's messengers.

In a private letter to Hector, Fraser held out one hope, and he begged that in such an extremity "pride might be put to the wa'." He had found out that John Cameron, of Assynt, was the power behind the Perth directors. "And you must just gang your ways and '*whilliwha*' this new laird, Hector. Say that you hae to bow and beck a bit, a man's bonnet in his hand never did him harm, and you ken weel I must trust to you in this matter, for the MacAllister will neither do what I think right, nor tak what he thinks wrong."

MacAllister took the situation, indeed, with real or with affected indifference. "I have fixed my plans," he said, "and I am going to Golspie Linn to catch grilse. They are in prime season now, and some o' Clan Chattan have trysted me there. It's no likely that I'll disappoint a party o' Highland *gentlemen* for a wheen, peddling, pettifogging writer bodies. No; I'm in my ain country, and they that come seeking me there without any invite will just come at their ain risk and charge.

"But Angus, father, Angus? What is to be done with him? Fraser says that there are plenty in Perth who call what he has done treason against King George."

"*That* for King George!" said the old chief, snapping his fingers in a passion of defiance; and dinna ye fret about Angus. "They'll hae to catch the lad afore they can do aught to him, and I wish them joy o' their chase after Angus MacAllister!"

“Father, I entreat you don’t encourage Angus in defying the law any further; the day of reckoning is sure to come sooner or later.”

“Much obliged to you, Maister Hector MacAllister for your civil advice,” answered the laird, in a furious temper; “if Angus has done aught against the law he did it in my behalf. I’ll never be the one to ask him bend his head to either king or kaiser. If wrang he has done, he’ll stand by the wrang, and I’ll stand by him. Yes will I, though the heavens fall for it!”

The last words were uttered with an intonation and force that forbade any reply to them. Hector went silently and wrathfully away, and the laird, after a promiscuous abuse of laws and law-makers, new times and new-fangled gentlemen, called for his gillies in a voice which brought them very promptly around him.

“You’ll all o’ ye meet me in Glen Linn within four hours. You’ll forget naething we may want for two, and may be four weeks’ stay. We are going to meet *gentlemen*, and you’ll see I hae a proper tail after me, pipers, and henchmen, and a’.”

Then he went to his desk, put some gold in his sporran, and walked rapidly down the hill towards the fir wood. Hector was too angry to attempt to stop him again; he had not the least hope in any further reasoning, and he knew that he was going to warn Angus. Equally sure was he that nothing he could now say would have any effect upon the unruly youth; he would take his own way, and be aided and abetted in it both by his father and his gypsy kinsmen.

The embassy Fraser had set Hector was a bitterly mortifying one to the proud young Highland chief. To make Cameron’s acquaintance through asking a favor of him—to confess his father’s pecuniary embarrassments—to make apologies for his brave, handsome brother—to be either denied his request or to be put under an obligation—every light in which Hector regarded his mission was painful and humiliating.

“I shall acknowledge the debt and ask the favor concerning

Angus. If I succeed, that will be well enough, and if not, no harm is done save to my own pride, and—I'll promise it full payment if Cameron runs in debt to me that way. Yes; I should pay a claim of that kind, I feel I should, to—the—last—tittle!" His face was dark and angry even at the supposition, and it was easy to see that the education and polish of modern life might, under certain circumstances, be quite unable to control his inherited nature.

He dressed himself for his visit to Assynt with an unusual care, for he had lived enough in fashionable life to be aware of the importance attached to a good appearance. Few of his countrymen were good horsemen, but Hector was an exception to this rule, and as the road, after the mountain descent, was practicable for such a mode of travel, he determined to adopt it.

Assynt Castle was about ten miles distant, but the days were long; and even if Cameron should be so inhospitable as not to offer him a night's rest, he could return to Strathleven without any effort. So he ordered his gilly to lead his horse down the mountain and wait for him in the clachan below, for he had an eager desire to see the laird and Angus again, and he expected to find them in the fir wood; but when he arrived there the ashes of the extinguished camp-fire were all that was left of the late happy party. Of neither his father nor his brother, nor the Gordons, was there a single token.

He was so anxious and disappointed that even the ride through the cool glens, and over the smooth, hard sands of the seashore, failed to restore his spirits. He knew the situation of Assynt Castle, though he had not been there for many years; and as its gray, square walls came in sight he began to recall its grim aspect, and the bare old courtyard, in which so many wild gatherings and fierce fights had taken place.

For a moment a shadow of regret for the old times crossed Hector's mind. "Thirty years ago," he thought, "any MacAllister would have shamed to go the road I take to-day. They would have asked no man's favor, and sorted the law with their own hand. I wish—no, no; what am I saying? Any man

can fight; there are nobler things than dirks and brute force." And yet the shadow of regret remained, for though reason may assure, it often fails to comfort.

How great a change was slowly stealing into the Highlands, Assynt, under its new Lowland master, showed him that hour. The great bare court had become a wondrous garden. Beds of August lilies, of heliotrope, and geraniums filled the senses with beauty and perfume. "This is better than the shouting of men and the clash of broadswords; *yes, it is better,*" he said, with a positiveness that still had a shade of sorrow in it; and then he dismounted, for he had reached the entrance to the castle, and a groom stood waiting to take his horse.

Anxious as he was, Hector still noticed with satisfaction that the fine old hall had been refurnished in excellent taste. The old Assynt trophies of battle, the battered shields, and glorious flags of hard-won fields still adorned the walls, though they were artistically blended with fine paintings of chase and war. The heavy oaken furniture, the soft mats, and the stand of gorgeous flowers were no incongruities in the young laird's eyes. He had not studied epochs with regard to household matters, and they pleasantly united the romance of the past with the comfort and elegance of modern taste.

He had scarcely time to notice these things when he saw Cameron coming to meet him. Generally Hector was deferentially polite and non-asserting with men older than himself, but he was conscious that in approaching the master of Assynt he unavoidably carried himself with a hauteur very much at variance with his nature. The mood was perhaps the natural one of a proud spirit resenting an office it disliked, or it might be the armor of one who enters a conflict of which it knew none of the conditions.

Cameron met him with outstretched hand and a very pleasant warmth of manner. "MacAllister, I am glad to see you. I know you by sight and by reputation, and I am glad, very glad, to shake your hand, laird."

"Cameron, I am sorry that it is a selfish rather than a cour-

teous reason which has brought me to Assynt. I am come to ask a favor of you."

"All the same, you are welcome, laird; the more welcome if I can do anything to pleasure you."

But Hector saw that, in spite of the fair words, the old merchant's face settled into cautious curves, and he determined to state his business at once, before the new laird wasted compliments which he might afterwards regret. So without preface he entered at once into the particulars of his father's trouble with the Perth Bank, and Angus's boyish, ill-advised interference with the messengers of the law.

Cameron listened carefully to Hector's story. He never interrupted it by question or remark, and when it was finished sat silent and thoughtful for some moments. Indeed, Hector's temper was rapidly rising, and he was on the point of abruptly terminating the interview, when Cameron's face cleared like a flash of light, and he said, cheerfully, "Well, MacAllister, I'll take a short session with myself concerning these matters. I am not prepared to speak now. We will have something to eat and drink, and you shall go to your room and rest; after dinner I will tell you what can be done."

"At your time, Cameron; I can find my way to Strathleven as well by night as by day."

"No need to ride at night. You say the laird and your brother are gone to Golspie; you have no company at Strathleven, and I have none at Assynt; we may as well make the best of each other for a few days, I think."

But Hector, in spite of Cameron's courtesy, knew that his stay must depend on the answer to his request. If it were refused he should leave Assynt at once; and even if it were granted, he was afraid that the sense of obligation would be a strain on his good-temper which he would not care to push too far. In fact, Hector knew that he was already in a bad temper, and that the chances were it would become worse.

The frequent resort to the gold snuff-box he carried in his hand was a symptom of very great agitation in Hector, though,

as his servant Roy mentally commented, "It wad hae been ta dirk as weel as ta mull that Laird Angus wad hae been finger-ing." Still, so complex are our sternest feelings, that it is hard sometimes to separate the most tragic from the most commonplace, and it is certain that not a little of Hector's annoyance arose from the fact that he had forgotten to tell Roy to bring his dress suit. In fine cloth, rich laces, silk hose, and diamond buckles, he felt that he could take a favor more complacently.

Such a little thing turns the weathercock of our feelings. Hector glanced at his servant and saw him busily plaiting his best laces, while his satin vest and finest suit lay ready to put on. Hector was now disposed to look upon life as at least possible; and an hour afterwards, when Roy had carefully dressed him, he had gained a confidence and calm satisfaction which had quite restored his self-control.

Cameron was astonished and pleased when he saw the young chieftain. Hector had unwittingly paid him the most delicate of compliments, for if the new laird had a *very* weak point, it was a love of that ceremony and deference to appearances which acknowledged the high social position he had won. His own suit of rich black velvet set off admirably his strong face and snow-white hair; but such is the influence of a fine personal presence, that Cameron acknowledged at once, in his own heart, the superior dignity of the native-born lord of the soil.

He looked with keen pride and pleasure at the handsome young man, and in that moment there sprung up a design to marry him to his only child, and endow him, as his adopted son, with all the lands of Assynt. This thought was in his mind as he led Hector up to his daughter. And Hector had not been indifferent or oblivious of this probable meeting; a presentiment of its approach had been an influence in all his toilet anxieties, and he had more than once tried to recall all that Fraser had said about the heiress of Assynt.

But he had failed completely in all his imaginations. Grace Cameron was unlike anything that his fancy had pictured her. She was neither a hoyden, nor a spoiled child, nor a young lady

full of the importance of a new position; she was simply the very lily of a dainty, highly-nurtured maidenhood. Her dress was a "frock" of white silk, tinted with a minute trailing vine, a pelerine of softest India mull, with knots of pale blue satin, long gloves of exquisite fit and workmanship, and a little French fan, which she used with a great deal of quiet, ladylike grace.

These details Hector took in at a glance, and then, as Cameron named his daughter, he looked into her face. It more than justified her toilet—it was fresh, delicate, and bright, just shadowed by the loose, soft curls that lay upon her brow, and nobly finished by a mass of pale brown hair, fastened on the crown by a golden comb richly jewelled. She had been accustomed from childhood to polite society, and, without being clever enough to alarm men, she was witty and well-informed. Taught to keep all her likings in thorough control, if she had a "ruling one" it was a very innocent devotion to flowers; and Hector soon found himself before a stand of gorgeous fuchsias, listening with a strange delight to her pretty praises of them, and watching with still greater admiration her fair face, low bent among their dark green leaves and crimson bells.

To Cameron these two handsome figures, swaying and bending towards each other, touching hands amid the flowers, and changing smiles and thoughts with low laughter, was the pleasantest sight he had seen in all the sixty years he could remember. When dinner was served he led the way, but it was delightful to turn round and see Hector daintily holding Grace's gloved fingers, and leading her slowly down the wide stairway, full of the yellow glory of the setting sun.

Through all the eating and drinking, the soft laughter, and the merry talk, John Cameron was turning over and over one single thought—the suitableness of a marriage between Grace and Hector. And there was really nothing selfish in his scheme; he had taken a sudden and warm liking for the young laird, but Hector's handsome face and stately manners had touched Cameron's fancy quite as much as his ancestral acres or his ancient pedigree.

CHAPTER IV.

LAIRD ANGUS AND A HORSE-TRADE.

“A proper man, as one shall see in a summer’s day.”

“The boy hath sold him a bargain ; a goose, that’s flat.”

“A child of our Grandmother Eve—or for thy more sweet understanding, a woman.”

CAMERON, though capable of indulging a romantic liking, was by no means reckless as to what concerned the real welfare of those whom he loved. When Grace had left the two men alone over their cups, he resumed at once the business which had brought Hector to Assynt.

“I have sent a swift messenger to Perth two hours ago, MacAllister,” he said. “The bank has acted in a way which I regret exceedingly. I have also advised Lawyer Fraser to pay the principal and interest due as soon as convenient to him. As for expenses, I think those who made all this hubbub must pay for it. The old directors would never have dreamed of forcing the MacAllister to pay an account, but new brooms try to make cleaner sweeping than is needful.”

“You have done us a great kindness, Cameron, and we shall not forget it.”

“Tut, tut ! nothing at all ; you would have done as much for any kindly neighbor. Now, as to that foolish-like business of your brother’s, my advice is this. In a few weeks let Angus and Ewen show themselves in Perth. I shall have had speech with the men who accuse them in the meantime, and have made them understand that it will be best for them if the matter go no further, or, if they are called upon to testify, to be *very particular* in identifying. All of the men are known to

be o'er-fond of Glenlivet, and, what with whiskey and weariness, I should doubt myself (if I had not heard your confession of it) whether they had not dreamed the whole story. Now let us dismiss the subject for the present; I dare say Grace will give us a cup of tea and a song if we join her."

Under ordinary circumstances Hector would have preferred his glass of Burgundy to the Chinese herb, for which he cared little. When he saw Grace fingering the frail, egg-shell china cups, he felt that whatever he drank out of them must be delicious. Her charming seriousness about the pretty, womanly business was so delightful, that he heard only as a man in a dream hears the conversation which he felt himself compelled to keep up with his host.

Fortunately, in song, the young people found a subject which made them at once sympathetic. Cameron watched them turning over the leaves of Grace's music, and heard with a sense of content and delight their fresh young voices mingling in many a wild, pathetic strain. He had been accustomed to plan all his life, and little accustomed to see his plans fail, but he wisely enough told himself to-night that his present project took a woman into its conditions, and that therefore any hour might produce situations for which no possible provision could be made beforehand. "And though Grace is my daughter," he thought, "I may as well admit that she likes her own way, and is very apt to get it, sooner or later. Yes, yes, that is natural; she comes fair enough by that bent; it is a good thing in a man, but in a woman it is troublesome."

However, there was no need to seek trouble beforehand, and certainly present signs were as favorable as he could desire. Grace looked unusually lovely and happy, and Hector was—well, Cameron hardly saw how any girl could help admiring Hector. And then, Hector's land lay so snug to Assynt, it would be a shame not to unite them.

Of course, these were the natural thoughts of an old man who had made money, and who knew its value; but it must be admitted that even in Hector's heart they were not absent.

True, he scorned to recognize them, and indignantly upbraided himself when he found his mind inadvertently calculating the sum of the united acres; but, nevertheless, he knew that he nursed the dream of a rich Grace Cameron as he never would have done that of a poor one. Not that this was his ruling motive—he would have found it hard to resist Grace's rare beauty and culture under any circumstances, but still it was pleasant to feel that there was no need to resist it, and that both his inclinations and his interests would be satisfied in her.

It was singular that into the thoughts of neither father nor lover entered any fear of failure. As for Cameron, that was a conclusion he never admitted, and Hector was of the same temper. Waiting and wooing there might be, but he felt that in order to win Grace he would be willing to "strive with things impossible;" and "to strive," in Hector's code, was "to win." He believed in no other result.

Perhaps his confidence might have been shaken a little if he had heard the conversation in Miss Cameron's room that night as Grace sat before her mirror, and Christina, her maid, unbound and brushed the young lady's pale-gold hair.

"Did you see our visitor, Christina?"

"'Deed did I, Miss Grace."

"Is he not a splendid-looking Highland gentleman?"

"Maybe; maybe no. Wise folk dinna measure men by their inches."

"But he has the most elegant manners, and I am sure he has a good heart also."

"The heart is beyond kenning, Miss Grace. Manners I hae nae skill o'; but his lace rufflings were unco bonnie!"

"Christina, you are cross. I ask you about a man, and you praise his lace ruffles! You know very well that young Mac-Allister is wonderfully handsome."

"He is nae half sae bonnie, nor half sae brave, nor half sae gude as the Laird Angus. I would na gie a nod o' Laird Angus's head for a' the city airs o' this young chief—nae mair

wad ony o' their ain people; and I'm thinking the folks who hae lived wi' them a' their born days ken which is the bonniest and the best o' the twa."

Grace sat thoughtfully fingering a little gold bracelet for some minutes, and then said, "Do you know Lord Angus, Christina?"

"It's no hard to know *him*! There is na a shepherd on the hills nor a fisher on the coast that has na shared their cake and porridge wi' Laird Angus. Laird Angus is ay doing somebody a gude turn. He took the end o' his shooting-piece to the black Laird o' Urquhart for troubling Rory MacAllister, wha—puir lad!—was just casting a line in the Leatrie Linn."

"Perhaps Rory had no right to fish in Leatrie Linn."

"He'll fish there *now*, right or no right, or Laird Angus will ken the reason why. It was Laird Angus that put aff to sea in the big storm last spring and brought hame again Tavish McLeod and his six sons. It was Laird Angus that sent three o' his ain lads to help the poor Widow Binnie get in her bit harvest o' oats. It was Laird Angus who saved Luckie Grant's little lad when he fell in the lake a few weeks syne. And when Black Dugald o' Assynt Point said what he should na hae said anent bonnie Maggie MacAllister, it was the Laird Angus that stood up for his poor clanswoman, and made Dugald eat his ain bad words at a dirk's point. Yes, indeed! he made Dugald tak' the lassie on his arm to the kirk the next Sabbath day, sae that a' might ken he was either a liar or a coward, ane or t'ither. Dinna talk to me anent the young MacAllister; he is na worthy to tie the ribbons at Laird Angus's knees!"

"Is Lord Angus as handsome as his brother?"

"*As handsome!* There is na the match o' Laird Angus MacAllister in the North Countrie!" exclaimed Christina, enthusiastically. "He is fit to be a king—and he ought to be a king, and it's a shame to think that he is na the eldest and the born chief of the MacAllisters!"

"You must be in love with him, Christina."

“Ow, ay. Everybody is in luv wi’ him—lads and lasses, baith o’ them.”

“Well, that will do; and you may leave me to-night, Christina.”

But she could not so dismiss the imaginary Laird Angus that Christina had raised. All his splendid beauty and bravery might be a myth, but none the less it strangely influenced Grace. Hector was sensible of some change in Grace, but he never dreamed that it was a shadowy ideal of his brother which stood between them, nor did any feeling of jealousy touch him when he found Grace so interested in Angus and so willing to talk about him.

He loved Angus so dearly himself that he always gladly suffered the conversation to revert to him. Sitting together through the hot, sweet hours in the shady summer-house, it was so pleasant to watch Grace bending over her lace-work, listening with glowing cheeks to his tales of Angus’s wild adventures—so pleasant to see her pretty triumph in Angus’s triumph over young Grant of Grant.

“And your brother took the dirk out of Grant’s belt?” she asked, with kindling eyes.

“Yes, he did that, and he defied Grant to retake it; and he wears it to this hour.”

“I know Malcolm Grant,” she said, scornfully. “He used to visit Aunt Janet in Edinburgh. If I see him there again and he wears no dirk I shall ask after it.”

“And if he wears one?”

“I shall advise him to keep it out of sight of Lord Angus MacAllister.”

It was little wonder that in the charm of such confidences Hector told her about his brother’s last adventure, making for him all the apology possible—in Angus’s peculiar bringing-up and education. And it was little wonder also that Grace could see no necessity for apology. “He did *exactly right*!” said this very proper young lady. “I do not wonder that MacAllister stands by him; I should stand by him too!”

Two delicious weeks Hector spent at Assynt. At the end of them he thought he might safely seek the laird, and inform him that all danger to his person was over. It would not be necessary to tell him yet of Cameron's interference; time enough had elapsed to suffer him to suppose that Fraser had effected a compromise, and sent him word to that effect, and the MacAllister was the last of men to trouble himself about business details.

In those days young people of good birth were vastly more ceremonious about their love-making than they are at present. Hector's eyes had perhaps said many things he would not yet have permitted his tongue to utter; and Grace knew very well how tenderly and honorably the young chief loved her. But their only parting was made on the broad steps of Assynt Castle, and in the presence of John Cameron and of Hector's servant.

And if Grace knew that Hector loved her, Hector was also satisfied. He did not expect from Grace Cameron more than she had given him. He had seen how the fair, cold girl could warm and glow over any topic that touched her sympathies, and he hoped that ere long those eager eyes would wait for his words and for his approach.

When he reached Strathleven he found that there had been a messenger from the laird, and that he was at the hunting-lodge in the Edderkyles. But Angus had not been with the party at Golspie, and he had not met them at the lodge, and if Ewen knew anything of his favorite he was determined to trust no one with the secret.

"'Twill pe petter for you not to ken, laird," he said to Hector, "for then, if anypoty asks questions, you'll na need to tell lees. And Angus can puckle her pelt her nainsel, na fear o' tat."

"I wish I knew whether Fraser is at his own house in Dornoch?"

"Tacent man is Lawyer Fraser. I heerd o' him last nicht; he was at Peter Finlay's."

This was good news to Hector. If Fraser had been at Peter Finlay's the night before he would doubtless be at Strathleven within a few hours, and he resolved to take no further steps until he saw him. He had not long to wait, for when he returned to the castle, Fraser had just arrived—cross, weary, and complaining sorely of the heat, and the rough road, and the tormenting midges that infested the swampy ground over which a great part of his day's travel had been.

"But 'they that board wi' cats maun count on scarts,' as the saying is; and I'll be a wise man when I hae learnt how to tak' care o' mysel'."

"You care overmuch for other people, Fraser; and some of us, I am afraid, are not over-grateful for your care."

"Grateful here, and grateful there, I'm no counting on that for my pay. Has onybody seen aught o' that daft lad, Angus?"

"No, I have not. Have you?"

"O'er muckle, o'er muckle by far. He gave me such a stun and such a fleg four days syne that I have na been mysel' since."

"Then you have seen him?"

"Seen him? Yes, indeed, hae I. And whar but in the broad streets o' Perth itsel'? If Deacon Strang had seen me that hour he would hae thought nothing less than house-breaking or highway robbery o' me, I was that dumfoun'ered!"

"How came you to see him?"

"I'll tell you, Hector. Cameron sent me a vera gentlemanly message anent yonder bank business, and I thought I would e'en step over and settle it out o' hand, and be clear o' the weary wark o' it. I knew all would count cannilie wi' me, except maybe Bailie Campbell, the new director from Argyle, and I feared he would be as contrarie as a' the Campbells and their kin are.

"But I'm thinking they had seen the shape o' John Cameron's handwrite, for they were wonderfu' civil, and Campbell mair civil than ony o' them (which was just extraordinar, seeing that

he was losing instead o' making), sae much so, that when I had pocketed my clearances, and was ready to say, 'Gude-morning, gentlemen,' Campbell insisted on going wi' me.

"He said he had a horse-trade in hand, and wanted my opinion anent the beast. I ken naething about horse-couping, but ony fool can gie an opinion, and I wasna going to let Campbell think I did na ken a gude bargain from a bad one. He said he had trysted the man to meet him at the south end o' the Watergate with the cratur; and I said, 'Vera weel, I could gang that way as gude as ony ither.'

"But just as we stepped out o' the bank on to the causeway, a man said, 'Bailie, I hae brought three horses for you to choose from, and there is a gude place behint to try their speed, if you will.' He was an ill-looking fellow, gypsy frae head to foot; and I ken na what put it into Campbell's head, but after looking at him a bit he says to me, 'I'll lay ten pound this is ane o' them gypsy fellows that led Sandy McNab's party such a rig in MacAllister's land.' 'What was that?' says I. 'Oh,' he answered, scornfully, 'you need na pretend, Fraser, that you ken naught o' that ploy—they were going to Strathleven to tak' the MacAllister.'

"I was a bit angry, so I said, in a pawky way, '*going and getting there*, it seems, were wide apart, Bailie Campbell.' Then his face blackened up, and says he, 'If I could put my hand on them as defied the law o' Scotland yonder fashion, I would gie a gude penny fee to punish them for it. These Hielandmen,' said he, 'ought to be taught how to behave themsel's though we have to hang them a' to teach them.'

"'It's nane o' the Campbells they'll tak' lessons from,' says I, 'but here's the horses, bailie, and you'll need a' your Campbell wits about you, if you are for trading wi' these gentlemen.'

"Then I looked at the ither man, and, Hector, it was Jasper Gordon, and he looked at me in *that way* that I could na hae spoken to him to save mysel'. Then he talked that fair to Campbell and put the horse he had through such paces that Campbell was willing to pay 'most any price for him.

“But Gordon seeing him fain, held off, and said he had one still finer. With that he gied a queer whistle, and a young lad cam’ tearing down the street, and this lad was just Angus MacAllister. He gied me the same glamouring look that Jasper gied me, and there I stood, watching him fleech and flatter Campbell till the trade was made, and Angus put two hundred pounds sterling in his pouch for a beastie no worth forty. Then he gied me anither o’ them uncanny looks o’ his, and rode awa’ on Jasper’s horse as if the constable were after him. You’ll no believe me, Hector, but he sent a gypsy lad that night *to me*—to me, a honest lawyer—wi’ every baubee o’ the twa hundred pounds, and bid me gie them to the MacAllister. He did that. As sure as life and death he did.

“And you took it?”

“What is it you think o’ me? I’m no that daft yet. I sent it back to him wi’ a letter, and bid him mak’ a straight road to the Orkneys, or ony ither out-o’-the-way place he could win at; the mair sae as Campbell had already found out how badly he had been hocussed, and had been to ask me if I could swear to the lad who sold him the horse.”

“What folly in Angus!”

“Wait till you hear the height o’ it. The next morn he sent Campbell a letter telling him that the horse was worth forty pounds, and that the balance was what he owed for meddling in affairs that didna concern him.”

“Oh, Fraser!”

“Wait a wee, there’s mair yet. The letter had this at the tail end o’ it, ‘Hielandmen are na above gieing Campbells a few lessons at one hundred and sixty pounds a lesson;’” and at this point Fraser, in spite of his pretended anger, could not prevent some very comical curves from gathering round his mouth, while Hector laughed outright.

Then Hector told Fraser of Cameron’s proposition for the quashing of the indictment against Angus and Ewen, and Fraser accepted it in part. “If Cameron would have a talk with Sandy McNab and the men who had accompanied him to

Strathleven, then Fraser would make exceptions, and have a new examination of the accusing parties. In that case he thought their evidence would be so contradictory that the charge would be dismissed."

"And what do you think of Angus and Ewen then, showing themselves in Perth?"

"I'll never hear tell o' it. I will na run the risk o' having him appear ony moment in some gypsy disguise. Why, Hector," said Fraser, with a queer tightening of his lips, "how would I feel, when cross-questioning Sandy, to lift my head and find thae black een o' his laughing at me! Na, na! I'll run nae such risks, it would be mair than my ain respectability is worth."

"Ewen knows where he is; I doubt if any one else at Strathleven knows."

"Only keep him awa' from Perth, and out o' the bailie's speering after. He will let the horse-couping matter drop soon; he is too proud to tell the country-side how easy a gypsy lad or a Hielandman got the better o' a Campbell."

Soon after this visit of Fraser's the pleasant summer weather broke up. The sheep were folded on the hills, the cattle sheltered in the forest, and everything prepared for a long and isolated winter. Hector had intended spending a part of it in Edinburgh, but he now considered that it would take him farther away from Angus if Angus got into more trouble; it would leave the laird alone, and it would be a greater expense than, perhaps, he ought to contemplate.

Yet, after all, he knew that his decision would rest with Miss Cameron's movements. If she went to Edinburgh, he would be very likely to find some excuse for following her; if she stayed at Assynt, it was certain Hector would remain at Strathleven.

One lovely morning, about three weeks after his return, when the calm, hazy October air was like an afterthought of summer, Hector determined to take advantage of the exceptional weather, and ride over to Assynt. MacAllister, who thought it a first ceremonious visit, made neither remark nor objection, and

at the last moment even condescended to word a polite message to Cameron.

"You see, Hector," he said, hesitatingly, and with a sigh, "yonder plan o' yours anent Angus is na that bad but what it might be worse. You'll look weel at the lassie, and if you think the same when you come back I'll e'en lay my commands on the lad. Times are sair changed, Hector, when a MacAllister can neither rive nor wive when it pleases him."

It was with this fresh tether on his affections that Hector made the visit he had been dreaming of for three weeks. The charge fretted him sorely, took the glory out of the sunshine, and the holiday feeling out of his heart. But when he entered Assynt Court, and saw Grace, he forgot everything but the joy of her presence. She was standing by the gardener, watching him tie up the overloaded stems of some snowy asters. Her hat swung over her arm, and the fresh breeze from the Atlantic blew her soft, brown curls, and fluttered the bright cherry-colored ribbons that fastened her dress.

When she saw Hector she came to meet him, putting out both her prettily-gloved hands, and blushing divinely with surprise and pleasure. Holding these hands, and looking into her face, all alight with welcome, Hector, for the moment, was sensible of nothing but his own rapture. The next hour was surely one stolen from some happier life than this. They wandered in the garden, or leaned over the old walls and watched the waves breaking on the shingly beach below them. Hector was too happy to say much, but Grace talked pleasantly, in a low, sweet voice, that was better than singing.

So lost was he in love's first sweet dream that it was only by a strong effort he could command words with which to meet Cameron, who, about an hour after Hector's arrival, returned from his daily ride. Then they went into the castle, and it was a fresh pleasure to watch Grace in all the womanly ways which appertained to her position as mistress of a large establishment. It was a very happy day, and when the first slant shadows of evening began to fall Cameron said,

“Run away, Grace, and put on your habit; I dare say MacAllister will let us take our evening ride on the sands with him.”

Hector was only too glad to be thus convoyed. He knew, too, that he showed to great advantage on horseback. It was a very lovely evening, and the calm beauty of the autumn sunset threw over the party a spell of happy silence—a silence, however, strangely eloquent to those who were listening to their own hearts. For a few minutes it was so profound that the far-off bark of a sheep-dog on the mountains startled them.

Cameron was the first to recognize outside conditions. “I think,” he said, “we must return now. The twilight will scarcely see us home, and I dare say MacAllister is anxious to ride more rapidly.”

Then Hector remembered his father’s message of greeting to the new neighbor, and, perhaps inadvertently, he gave it a more friendly tone than it had been sent with. It highly gratified Cameron. He accepted frankly the MacAllister’s excuses for a personal visit, and requested Hector to name some early day when Miss Cameron and himself could pay their respects to the laird at Strathleven.

Perhaps half-unconsciously, also, Hector intensified the good-feeling of this message, for the laird’s face showed that he was well pleased at Cameron’s recognition of the superior claim of his position.

“Was he that civil?” he said, complacently, in reply to Cameron’s message; “then we must e’en forget his father and his grandfather, and give him a laird’s welcome.”

CHAPTER V.

TWO QUARRIES AND TWO PROPOSALS.

“Intolerable and not to be endured.”

“The best-laid schemes o’ mice and men
Gang aft a-gley.”

THE idea of entertaining Cameron at Strathleven once admitted, the MacAllister seemed to take a lofty pleasure in arranging the visit. Nothing of the pomp and ceremony incident to his rank in its most splendid times would he have omitted. His henchman, in full Highland dress, carried the stately invitation, sealed with the arms of the MacAllisters.

The battle-flags and standards of the clan, colorless in their great age, and “torn to glorious rags” in the fierce fights they had passed through, were hung for the occasion in the great hall. All the clansmen were called in from the hills and the clachan; they lined the mountain-path, they filled the great courtyard, and they lounged in handsome, picturesque groups in the corridors and on the stairways. Henchman, bard, and piper kept close to the laird’s person, and half a dozen gillies, each having his special office, waited at the end of the apartment the slightest call of the laird’s silver whistle.

All this pomp, however, was in no respect out of place when it was considered with reference to the noble old chief to whom it appertained. Cameron thought he had never seen a grander mortal. Six feet four inches in stature, neither his seventy years, nor marches, battles, or exposures, had bowed his stately form. His head was still erect, his eyes bright and flashing, his voice strong, his skin ruddy, and his dress magnificent. The silken garters at his knees, the diamond buckles in his shoes,

only indicated the general splendor of his tartan suit, flashing with gems and silver.

He carried his bonnet in his hand, and advanced twelve paces to meet Cameron. These twelve paces had been a subject of hot debate. Hector had desired the laird to meet his visitor at the portal, but this condescension MacAllister had absolutely refused. "My father," he said, "just took twelve paces to meet the Duke of Athole when he came to Strathleven to consult on King James's matters, and I'm not sure that I'm doing right to put any Cameron even with Athole."

However, when the actual reception came, MacAllister proved himself a knight and gentleman far above all such considerations; for, seeing Miss Cameron upon her father's arm, he overstepped his line without a thought, and advanced to meet the lady with a courteous gracefulness that threw Hector's formal manners quite into the shade.

The fact was that Grace's loveliness, set off by an exquisite toilet, so captivated the laird that he forgot, in the presence of beauty, all minor things; this had always been a ruling motive in his life; to beauty MacAllister had ever lowered his loftiest pretensions. Grace aroused all the chivalry of his nature; her roselike, delicate loveliness, and her gentle, graceful manners, were a new form of womanhood to the old Highland chief, for he was quite capable of feeling the charm of a fair and highly-cultured woman. He thought of Angus's dark, glowing face and stately form, and then put this flower-like girl beside him, and he was charmed with the mental picture. "Hector was right; a wife like Grace Cameron would be the best security for Angus."

The three first days of the visit the weather was exceedingly fine, and admirably suited for out-door pleasures. Cameron, keeping steadily in view a plan he had for inducing MacAllister to join him in the fisheries and other industries he was inaugurating, managed, during the period, to become well acquainted with the capabilities of the MacAllister estate.

On the fourth day the weather broke, a storm confined every

one to the house, and then came Cameron's opportunity. But, somehow, he made business pleasant to the chief, for Cameron had bland, conciliating ways of putting things; he knew how to respect prejudices and avoid harmless vanities, and in five days he accomplished what Fraser would hardly have managed in five years.

Doubtless Grace and Hector contributed to this result. Cameron had his own views about Hector, and MacAllister about Grace; and though these were not spoken of, the sight of the young people sitting together in some window recess, or bending over the same book, or singing the same song, made both men tolerant and conciliating.

On the last evening of the visit a circumstance occurred which bound them still closer together. The cloth had been drawn, but the two old men were still sitting at the table and listening to Grace and Hector, who were singing. Finally Grace struck up a wild, stirring, Jacobite "gathering song," and its martial refrain strangely agitated the laird.

He slowly filled his glass, and then poured it out on the floor with the air of a man offering a libation, afterwards sobbing out the refrain with a passion too genuine not to deserve respect. It was so genuine that it touched something deeper than all the prudences and reasonable convictions of Cameron's life. He, also, silently filled his glass and followed MacAllister's example; then the two men clasped hands as they had never done before.

It was just at this juncture a gilly came in with a letter to Hector from Laird Angus. He was almost glad of the diversion. Whether it was the fourfold sympathy of the song or some peculiar tenderness in Grace's manner mattered little; he had been on the point of saying words which, alas, he must not say yet. Happily the transition of feeling was so complete as to bring an entirely new atmosphere into the room. For once Angus's letter was altogether good; he had had no quarrels, and he had been in no extraordinary dangers.

Moved by various reasons, none of which he stopped to ex-

amine, Hector began a conversation about his brother in such an enthusiastic tone that Grace could not but feel interested in it, and subsequent events contributed to strengthen the power which this unseen knight was gaining over her. Cameron's projects were yet in their infancy, and needed his constant care; consequently he remained at Assynt, and the two households found the long, stormy winter shortened by such mutual hospitalities as the weather permitted. In all their intercourse Angus became a prominent subject of conversation, and Hector did not see that, however far he had touched her heart, Angus was the lord of her imagination.

Thus at Assynt and Strathleven the winter went not unpleasantly away. Many new hopes had come into the lives of the laird and his eldest son. The profitable changes Cameron was making on his own estate were to be gradually extended, and the prospects for the future lords of MacAllister were of a flattering character in a financial point of view. Both Hector and his father had come to think of Grace always in connection with any changes at Strathleven, though they did not think of her in the same way.

MacAllister discussed her marriage with Angus in the frankest manner to Hector, and Hector had never but once dared to suggest the possibility of Grace preferring the brother whom she had known first. The laird received the supposition with incredulity, and hoped, with a scornful laugh, that "his eldest son would never make a Jewish Jacob of himself, and steal away his younger brother's fortune."

Hector received this reproof with a conscious silence; the old chief was pitilessly keen where Angus was concerned, and he had looked down into his eldest son's heart, and detected its one false spot. But Hector could answer with a conscious integrity, "I have been true to Angus, father; always true. If I love Grace I have never let her see it; nor shall I unless Angus refuses to seek her hand."

"Angus must not—shall not—I will—"

"Father, Isabel Gordon may stand before Miss Cameron."

“The height o’ nonsense! I’ll hear none of it!” Then remembering his former opinion on Angus’s right to marry whom he would, he said, querulously, “I have changed my mind on many things, son Hector. We have gotten a new king, and new laws, and we must choose wives accordingly.”

“You married where you loved, father.”

“Yes, and I went where I listed likewise. A man could take gold with his sword then; he did not need to wed it with a ring. It is not my fault, Hector lad, that the nobler way has gane out of fashion. Forbye, I like the lassie! Gold, or no gold, I want my Angus to wed her. Hector, dear lad, you will hae the land, let your brother hae the lass.”

This was a tone Hector could never resist from his father; and, though he was not able to say a word in reply, MacAllister knew from the manner in which his offered hand had been clasped that no temptation would make Hector untrue to his brother’s interests.

Still the laird was anxious. The marriage of Grace and Angus had become the pet project of his old age, and he entered into it with all the earnestness that had characterized the warlike expeditions of his youth. Isabel’s influence he did not much fear—“they are both wilful, and both have tempers of their own; they will have quarrelled before this, I’m thinking; and I’ll e’en send for Jasper, and get him to marry her to some of her ain people,” he decided.

This difficulty was the subject of his thoughts one morning as he rode over to Assynt. On his way there he met Dominie Talisker of Assynt, and as they were riding the same way they continued in company. The Taliskers had intermarried with the MacAllisters, and the laird had a great respect for the clergyman’s influence and good sense. He was also John Cameron’s right-hand man, and it would be a good thing for Angus if Talisker would prepare the way for him by a word now and then in his favor. While the laird was wondering how best to introduce a subject so important to him, the dominie said,

“When did ye hear from Laird Angus MacAllister?”

“Weeks syne; I’m not sure how many.”

“Wherever he is, I hope he is behaving himsel’ better than he did in his ain hame.”

“What do you mean, dominie? You are weel shielded ahint your coat, or you would na dare to speak those words to me. And pray what business is it of yours how Laird Angus behaves himself?”

“It is always my business to reprove what is wrong; and, laird, I dinna think ye hae done your duty by your son lately.”

“Oh indeed!”

“There was that affair with the king’s messengers.”

“It will be great news to King Geordie to hear that *the Taliskers* are standing up for him.”

“Come, come, laird, wrang is wrang whaever does it; and though I might find excuses for Angus in a matter o’ politics and lawyer’s troubles, there is nane at a’ to be offered anent yon gypsy beggar lass. They are thieves and vagabonds, every ane o’ them, laird; they will neither come to kirk on the Sabbath Day, nor yet listen to me on ony o’ the sax days. Ye should keep your lad out o’ such bad company, laird.”

“You will take heed how you speak o’ my kinfolk, Dominie Talisker. Gypsies! Beggars! Thieves! Vagabonds! Eh? They are of as gentle blood as the Taliskers, and that I will maintain at my dirk’s point. I married my wife out of their tents. Now, sir!”

“Laird, I was wrang. I hae nae right to speak o’ ony o’ God’s creatures that way. What I said you will put down to Tavish Talisker his ain sel’, and not to the office he fills. I’m sair grieved I didna speak in a mair Christian-like way.”

“There’s a variety of Christian-like ways; yours may pass with the rest of them. Gude-morning to you, dominie.” And with the consciousness that he had kept his temper wonderfully and got the best in the dispute, the laird rode proudly forward.

This little incident only strengthened his determination to marry Angus to Grace, and he determined to speak at once to

Cameron about it. Everything seemed favorable for such a proposal. Cameron saw him coming, and met him at the gate of the castle. He was proud of MacAllister's acquaintance and anxious to win his good-will, and this morning's visit was singularly opportune, for Cameron had been thinking of him, and wondering if he would be willing to join in manning a fleet of herring-boats during the coming summer.

As they sat before the blazing pine-tops Cameron frankly asked his co-operation. MacAllister listened at first courteously, and, as the pecuniary advantages became apparent, with great interest.

"It is a good ploy every way, Cameron," he answered, heartily, "and I am wi' you in it; there's my thumb on it. If you will see to the boats, I will provide the men."

"You think your people will be willing?"

"I dinna think about it; I am sure they'll be willing if it's the MacAllister's pleasure for them to go. Why should na they?"

"And the men are to have half the profits; the other half you and I will divide. That is fair, eh?"

"Fair enough for me, Cameron, seeing that I have no outgo; but I'll make it up to Assynt, that will I," said the laird, proudly. "Cameron, I have taken your offer free and kindly, now I'll give you an offer. Giff-gaff makes gude friends."

"Any offer the MacAllister makes me I shall be very proud to consider."

"Certie; that is well answered, Cameron, and I don't deny that it is an honor. I would offer myself, the Chief o' the MacAllisters, if I was only twenty years younger; but I'm too old now for so bonnie a lass, so I ask your daughter's hand for my son, sir. I trow he is worthy o' it."

Cameron's face glowed with pleasure. "Nothing on earth could content me more, MacAllister. Grace will have plenty of gold, but I value good birth and an ancient family like yours far beyond wealth. If my daughter weds with MacAllister she shall go to him full-handed."

“Miss Cameron is worthy of a royal duke if she had na a bawbee; but doubtless the gold is both needfu’ and charming also.”

“She shall have fifty thousand pounds on her wedding-day, and Assynt, as weel as sundries in Edinburgh property, will be hers at my death. Besides, I really think the young things are fond of one another.”

“What is it you say, Cameron? You are wrong there. They have never met each other yet.”

“Then we are both wrong, laird, and I am very sorry for it. I was thinking of Laird Hector.”

“And I was meaning Laird Angus. But you need not trouble yoursel’, Cameron, she is sure to like Angus when she does meet him. Have you ever met my youngest son, Cameron?”

“No, laird, but I have heard much of him, and, as this matter touches my child, I must frankly tell you that I could not sanction a marriage between Laird Angus and my daughter.”

MacAllister flushed passionately, but he was pleading for his favorite’s welfare, and he made a strong effort to control his anger.

“A few silly, boyish tricks, Cameron; they don’t touch the lad’s heart. That is true and brave; every drop of blood in it is true and brave. Everybody loves Angus best.”

“I prefer Laird Hector MacAllister, and if you are in my mind I’ll stand to what I have said. If they marry next year, or next week, I will give to Grace fifty thousand pounds.”

“A poor penny that to buy a husband for your lass! Do you know, sir, that Hector MacAllister is not only laird of a clan as auld as the Flood and aulder, sir, but he is also the nephew o’ the great Duke of Gordon. His mother was the duke’s own sister, sir. *Fifty thousand pounds!* Hector might wed a princess, Cameron, and there is none that could call it a mismatch.”

Cameron bowed. Indeed, his prejudices about birth were so great that he quite believed MacAllister. He was not offended at his anger, but he was keenly disappointed at the failure of a

scheme which he had so earnestly desired, and which had seemed to be on the verge of a satisfactory fulfilment.

"I am very sorry, MacAllister."

"And you will be sorrier yet, sir. However, gude-day to you;" and the laird rose proudly and walked towards the door. He was too angry to listen then to either regret or reason, and Cameron wisely permitted him to indulge his temper. He guessed that the result would be what it actually was, for MacAllister had not reached Strathleven before he regretted the irritable manner in which he had left Assynt.

"A hasty man is never out o' trouble," he said, "and now I'll have lost all chance o' that herring-money. *Umff! Umff!* Let it go with the fish to the deep sea! I'll never hear Angus slighted for all the gold in Scotland."

He was in the courtyard at Strathleven when he reached this decision, and, quite satisfied with it, he lifted his head and saw Fraser coming to meet him.

"Weel, auld Pounds-shillings-and-pence, what new botheration hae you brought me?"

"I have come wi' gude news, and naething but gude news, MacAllister."

"Then after that comes a cow to be shod. To take the wonder aff, Fraser, I have gotten bad news, though maybe you can sort it. You are pawky enough to help the deil out o' a creel."

"I dinna like his pay, laird, and—"

"Come in, sir, and I'll tell you all about it. Here, Hamish! Rory! Neill! Lauchlan! tak' these beasts and stable them, and see the blaze is bright and the water boiling, and tell Airly it is none too early for dinner. Come along! Come along, Fraser!"

The lawyer took things more coolly; he gave Rory special directions about his cob and the quantity of oats and water it was to have; then he watched its gait across the court, and finally, after a look of delight at the woods and strath, so beautiful in the glory of early spring, he sauntered up, to the hearthstone

in the great hall, and stood rubbing his hands before the blaze.

"Sit down, Fraser, sit down, man! I want to have this morning's wark out with you before Hector comes in. Would you believe it? I, *I!* have taken two fair, square insults within the last four hours, and I have never said angry word, nor drawn dirk about them."

"Think again, laird. Not one angry word?"

"Weel, I kept my temper wonderfu' with the dominie."

"What is this? Hae you been quarrelling baith wi' laird and dominie?"

"Laird, indeed! A new cock laird! If Cameron is 'laird,' then I wonder what *I* am?"

"You are *MacAllister!* We a' ken that. But what set you quarrelling with these twa men, of a' ithers?"

"What set them quarrelling with me? Ask that. I met Talisker as I was riding to Assynt, and he ups and tells me more o' my duty than I'll stand from ony man—priest or lawyer. Still, I kept my temper wonderfu', and I left the dominie very ill-satisfied with his own behavior—as well he might be. But Cameron was that pleasant, I forgot all about the little splutter, and he made me a proposal I thought very highly of."

"What was it?"

"He is building a fleet o' herring-boats, but he has not the men to work them."

"No, I'm thinking not. Assynt has been in the courts for thirty years—neither laird nor master on the place; and the men have scattered maistly all o'er the world—weel?"

"He was to find the boats and I the men; and we were to divide one half the profits between us. I thought I might say 'Yes' to that offer."

"Certie! The advantage is clear on your side. You didna quarrel anent this, surely?"

"No, we quarrelled because he refused to let his daughter wed with Angus. That is what we quarrelled about."

Fraser colored angrily. "I can scarce credit it, laird. John

Cameron refuse a marriage wi' the MacAllisters! Why, he was fidgeting fain for it when he and I spoke o' the matter."

"Then you have been trading aff my sons without a 'By your leave, laird,' have ye? I didna think that o' you, Fraser."

"Hush, hush, laird. You are talking without ony knowledge o' the subject. I did naught but speak well o' Angus, and bid Miss Grace look out for her heart wi' such a bonnie neighbor lad. And when she blushed I just turned to Cameron and said, 'There is many a true word said in joke, and this would be a good one to come true.'"

"And what said Cameron?"

"He said naething could please him better, for that the MacAllisters were the noblest blood in Scotland."

"And then?"

"I said Laird Angus was the prince o' his house. Then Cameron poured out a glass o' wine, and we drank it thegither. I understood that he drank wi' me to the success o' the marriage we had spoken of. I like not that Cameron goes back on a paction wi' me."

"Umff! I like it not either."

"Then I spoke to Hector about it, and he thought weel o' such a marriage. Afterwards I spoke to Angus, but Angus had anither lass between him and his five senses at the time, sae my words blew by him like an idle wind. But for a' that and a' that, I am for wedding Angus wi' Grace Cameron. When folks mak' a bargain, though it be only wi' the lifting o' an eyelid, I am for seeing that they keep it."

"Stop, Fraser. I haven't told you all yet. He did not want Angus to wed his daughter, but he was keen to mate her with Laird Hector. He even said they were fond of each other. That is just impossible! Hector has known from the first that we have sorted Grace Cameron to his brother. Then, besides, Hector kens what belongs to his birthright. The Laird o' MacAllister and the nephew o' Gordon, he must marry no woman who cannot even herself with him."

“You are right there. Hector *ought* to marry for the gude of the MacAllisters. There is nae cause why he should na sit in the House o’ Lords yet. If you will do as I tell you, the estate will warrant it in ten years. I’m looking to see Hector wi’ a duke’s coronet on him, that I am.”

“We ought to have worn it lang ago, Fraser, as you know, but for—weel, let that pass—but Ivor MacAllister had the promise of a dukedom fra—weel, weel, it was na to be, though the papers were made out, and had the royal signature—conditional. But it is a far cry back to Killiecrankie, and we need not name it now ; still, as you say, Hector may sort it all, and the MacAllister sit in the House o’ Lords yet.”

The thought was so pleasant to both men that they silently indulged it for some minutes ; indeed, until they were interrupted in their ambitious dream by the entrance of Hector himself. He had been out on the hills and was tired and hungry, but he was always glad to see Fraser, although Fraser, still under the spell of his splendid reverie, addressed him with a deference very puzzling to the unconscious future duke.

Hector’s instant thought was “bad news,” but his first inquiry dispelled this fear. “Is there to be any more trouble about Angus and that Perth affair, Fraser?”

“No ; that business ended wi’ a girn and a laugh, Hector, though it looked black enou’ at first. At the second examining neither Sandy McNab nor any o’ the others were sure o’ anything, except that they had been very tired, and drunk some hot whiskey. The judge gave Sandy an extraor’nar severe reproof.”

“Poor Sandy !”

“Hout ! There were compensations—compensations. Sandy was satisfied, and Angus is as free as I am. The lad is as lucky in getting out o’ scrapes as he is handy in getting into them. There is anither reason, however, for my present visit to Strathleven. The Sinclairs hae offered ten thousand pounds down for the MacGunns’ land, and twa thousand mair in twa years. It is a gude offer, and you had better tak’ it, MacAllister. The

land is parted from your land by twelve miles o' Sinclair moss and bog, and the men are no near kin o' yours. Let them go."

"How much will it take to give them a fair start in Canada?"

"Twa thousand pounds will mak' the whole ninety happy. You can spare that, for you'll hae eight thousand to clear off mortgages and—"

"And then I'll build my ain herring-fleet, and Cameron can get his men where he lists. I shall tell my lads not to let Cameron's boats near my shore—they won't mind turning herring-fishers if there is a chance of fighting too."

Hector rose to his feet and looked at his father in amazement, but the laird would not see the storm he had raised. He continued to watch the blazing fire with a thoughtful smile, and Fraser was compelled to answer the young man's look of miserable inquiry.

"There has been a little trouble with John Cameron, Hector; and I must say, in this case, the laird is not to blame. Cameron has behaved badly—very badly."

"What about? Be honest with me, Fraser."

"About Miss Cameron. She is gude, and bonnie, and rich, but there is naething can excuse Cameron for declining a marriage wi' the house o' MacAllister. Too much honor for him, if he knew it."

Hector turned pale, but he walked to the window with a firm and stately step, and stood looking out in silence. No one was inclined to disturb him, and he was compelled to ask the question on which his life seemed to hang.

"You say that Cameron refused his daughter to our house?"

"Yes."

"What had he against me? Angus he does not know."

"He had nothing against you, Hector. He would give you his daughter and fifty thousand pounds with her; it is Angus he declines."

A bright flush which it was impossible for Hector to control succeeded the deathly pallor on his cheeks. He turned

round and left the room without a word. But Fraser had been watching him, and his heart throbbed sorrowfully for the young laird. All the same, he was determined to do everything in his power to utterly frustrate Hector's love and hopes.

For not the MacAllister himself was as eager to advance the glory of the MacAllisters as Fraser was. He had even made a careful study of the Scotch peerage, and prepared a list of rich and noble ladies from whom Hector might prudently take a wife. Hector was to secure parliamentary power or a place at court by his marriage; Angus, by uniting himself to the heiress of Assynt, was to extend the name and power of MacAllister along the western coast of Scotland.

This was Fraser's plan, and he was by no means inclined to relinquish it because John Cameron had changed his mind. He did not fear Hector interfering with his designs for Angus, but he was sorry that the lad should suffer in his self-denial. Hector's suffering, however, was a mere incident of the plan, and must not be allowed to affect final results.

The three men met again in the evening, but they were a dull party. Fraser and the laird confined their conversation to the emigration of the MacGunns, and Hector was silent and gloomy. But the laird always retired early, and Fraser knew that Hector was waiting to discuss the Cameron affair with him alone. The old man grieved for the duty before him, but he was determined to enforce it, even when Hector, white and stern in his anxiety and anguish, said, "Fraser, you have been a second father to me, and I know you would scorn to deceive me. Is there any good reason why I may not marry Miss Cameron?"

"There are many reasons, Hector. I am sorry—"

"*Sorry!* Oh, Fraser, I love the girl! I love her better than my life!"

"Not better than honor, not better than your promise to your dying mother, not better than the welfare and dignity of a name that has come to you through a long line of ancestors. No, no, Hector! You are na that selfish. I think better o' you than that."

“Oh, Grace! Grace!”

The cry was so heart-broken that Fraser felt a strong thrill of sympathy.

“Hector, my dear lad,” he said, mournfully, “he that lives for himsel’ lives a puir, mean life. You ought to be the head o’ the greatest as well as the auldest house in the North Countrie. The last twa chiefs did well to hold their ain, but you hae chances they never had, and ye canna let them pass by and be guiltless o’ wrangling the whole clan o’ the MacAllisters. You maun ceevilize these braw, brave savages, sir, and you maun marry to suit this lookout.”

“Grace has—”

“Grace has money, but she has na birth, and she has na influence, and these you canna pass by, though the want is nae fault for Angus, for if Angus weds her, then we may lawfully hope that the MacAllister’s name will cover all Assynt. Ye ken I told you this from the first, and you canna and you must na stand in your brother’s light. There is your cousin, Lady Betty Breadalbane, and your fourth cousin, Lady Kitty Menzies, and there are the twa bonnie daughters o’ the Earl o’ Fife and Buchan—”

“Stop, Fraser. If I may not marry Miss Cameron, then I will remain unmarried.”

“You’ll do naething o’ that sort. You *must* marry, Hector. You’ll no turn traitor against your ain clan and name. The Laird o’ MacAllister is bound to marry. Don’t go away angry, Hector; say ‘gude-nicht’ to me; I am your true friend, lad.”

“You believe it, I am sure, Fraser, but I am heart-sick and cannot see the justice of your argument to-night, especially if—if it should involve another.”

“Do you think the lassie loves you?”

“I had hoped so. I never asked her, and what a woman says with her blushes and smiles is all Greek to me. I cannot construe it.”

“All Greek! Greek would be easy reading, Hector. This is a language for which there is nae dictionary provided.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST CLOUD OF THE STORM.

“Rise, rise, Lowland and Highland man!
Bald sire to beardless son, each come and early;
Rise, rise, Mainland and Island man!
Belt your broad claymores—fight for Prince Charlie.”

FRASER took what he called “a lang session” with himself that night, for his distress at the unfortunate turn his matrimonial speculation had taken was not his only trouble concerning the house of MacAllister. Though he had said nothing to Hector, he was quite sure that the laird had some unusual anxiety on his heart, and an incautious remark of MacAllister’s had pointed to a cause which he could only believe likely on the ground that it was so unlikely and so dangerous—*the return of the Stuarts*. And he sat long and late, arguing out with himself the subject of his meditations.

“Yon was a queer fishing at Golspie. It meant more than grilse I’m doubting. Stewart o’ Appin, and Macdonald o’ Kerpoch, and Glencoe likewise! Unless I were daft to be ‘under suspicion’ I wouldna choose siccan a trio o’ Jacobites to go fishing wi’. There’s mair in the wind than MacAllister has told me. The Lord help us a’ if there’s anither rising! And what will Andrew Fraser do? I’ll hae to get somebody to put me out o’ sight and hearing o’ claymores and bagpipes. I’m a member o’ the kirk now, and I hae gotten a bonnie place o’ my ain. Surely, surely I hae come to my senses! Whatna for should I risk all on a whistle like? Is na ane king as gude as anither, and better too? And there’s that lad Angus. What will come o’ him? What *has* come o’ him? If there is water

boiling 'tween John o' Groats and Carlisle, he'll hae to be paddling in it. I'm an auld man—I'm an auld man—and I'll no lose my head for a' the crowns that ever were worn. But I'm misdoubting Angus sairly."

In the morning MacAllister was unusually inclined to business matters, but his uncertainty as to his proceedings in the MacGunn matter still further excited Fraser's suspicions. The previous night the hope of £8000 clear money had greatly excited him; in the morning he was not sure that he cared to sell the land.

"But you'll never mak' fishers o' the MacGunn, MacAllister. Let them gang to Canada."

"It is not for fishers I'm wanting them. They are grand fighters."

"But what do you want wi' fighters?"

"That's my own business."

"Are you going to conquer Assynt?"

"No jibing, Fraser. I have got business above your sorting."

"I am your humble friend and kinsman, laird. You have nae friend truer. Let the MacGunn go. It will be that much temptation out o' your way. Will you tell me where Angus is?"

"Don't trouble your head about Angus. He is wi' friends. I'm not to be questioned any further. I'll answer no questions, and I'll send no good men across seas. Now! That's my answer. But the Sinclairs are true Scots, and you may tell them to save their gold; they'll hae a grand use for it ere lang."

"You are na fooling *me*, laird?"

"I am not wanting to fool you."

"Speak to me plainly, then."

"It is not my time yet. Wait a bit."

"I wish I knew where Angus was."

"You are not the lad's father. If I can bear his absence, you may. I can't whistle him here exactly, but he is not very far off."

Indeed, he was nearer than even MacAllister suspected. In the woods scarcely five miles from Assynt there was a little

rocky defile, now ankle-deep in fresh green grass and wild blue violets. Here were pitched a couple of rude tents, and Angus was standing in the door of one of them. Those accustomed to seeing him in the costume of a Highland gentleman would scarcely have recognized him in his gypsy dress of corduroy and black velveteen, though in any case his fine stature and beautiful face would have attracted attention.

Isabel leaned against the silvery trunk of a beech-tree, and its tender green shadow threw a peculiar charm over her bright, vivid beauty. There was a mocking, indifferent, coquettish expression about her that seemed to be at once fascinating and irritating to Angus as he stood watching her.

"Angus," she said, as she lazily counted the silver beads in her necklace, "have you noticed Borzlam's new horse, and how splendidly he manages him?"

"Tell Borzlam that he had better not provoke too much of my notice."

"Ah, now you are angry again! You have a bad temper, Angus."

"Who gave you that necklace?"

"Borzlam. Be quiet, Angus. I was joking Borzlam about it, and he gave it to me. It was only a piece of merrymaking."

"I like not such merrymaking. Tell Borzlam that Angus MacAllister jokes with his dirk. You are a coquette, Isabel, and I despise a coquette. If you cannot give me love for love, I'll have no cheating—not a merk in money, not a smile in love. I am going away now. Farewell."

"Angus! Angus! Angus!"

But the young man was in far too fierce a passion of jealousy and anger to listen to the imploring cry. He walked rapidly away from the girl, who watched him out of sight, and then threw herself on the grass in a burst of grief and despair quite Oriental in character.

Angus took a straight road to Ewen's cottage, and the old man had evidently been expecting him.

"Ta things are ready," he said, kissing the hands of the

young chief with a devotion and tenderness that had something of a mother's love in it—"ta things are ready, and there's nane kens she's set eyes on yon laird. Now fats your will and pleasure, and she'll do it; fate'er it is, she'll do it."

"There is a new laird at Assynt, John Cameron. Have you seen him, Ewen?"

"Teet has she."

"He has a daughter. Do you know her?"

"She's seen her, mair nor ance or twice."

"Then you must have speech with her, and none must see you, Ewen; and you must give her this letter, and bring me an answer."

"She'll do tat same if she ties for it."

"Is my kilt and bonnet and philibeg here?"

"Tat it is, and your pelt and plaid, and prooch and purse. Her nainsel cleaned ta siller puttons, and sorted ta tassels and ta lace, and it's praw enough for a king to wear."

"Then away, Ewen, and bring me word back as soon as may be."

Ewen took a straight road to Assynt, keeping up that peculiar running trot that is even yet the gait of a Highlandman among the hills. Arrived at Assynt, he went at once to the kitchen. The cook, though of the clan of Macdonald, had married a MacAllister, and he was sure of a bite and a sup; the rest he left to good-fortune and his own keen observation.

He did not judge incorrectly. Margery made him heartily welcome; she was proud to show off her power and the many advantages of serving Cameron—though he was a new laird—and she gave Ewen of the best her larder afforded. He ate and drank with much condescension and complaisance, not any the less so because he had an idea that he was on a message likely to bring trouble to Cameron, whom he regarded as an interloper among Highland gentlemen.

"You'll hae a praw place, Margery."

"There's plenty o' meat and maut, Ewen, put it's a sair down-come from ta Macdonald's kitchen. Forty shentlemen o' his

ain name sat down ta meat tay by tay wi' him, na to speak o' ta gillies and caterans."

"Put ta Lady o' Macdonald was ill ta please, and there's na lady here you'll pe minding, Margery."

"Ye'll speak o' what ye can ken apout, Ewen MacAllister. Young een are quicker than auld een, and ta Lady o' Assynt—"

Just here a half-grown lad rushed into the kitchen, and in a breathless voice said, "Ye are ta send a pot o' clear proth and a cake o' wheat flour ta Luckie McLeod, and tat instanter, ta lady says sae."

"Then ye'll tak' it yoursel', Tugald; a' our men are at ta herring-poats."

"Hersel' hasna time; she's awa on a far mair important pusi-ness."

"Wha sent ye? Now dinna lee!"

"Ta Cameron lady."

"Then I say ye'll tak' it ta the lady."

"Hersel' has ither wark on hand. She's following a laird, and she isna at ony lady's peck and pow."

"Let him gang, Margery," said Ewen; "I'm for ta clachan, and I'll tak' ta pread and proth for Luckie. She's a far-awa cousin o' mine."

"Then you'll gang yer ways, ye loon! Out o' my kitchen, and let na ta grass grow under yer feet as ye gang." Then, turning to Ewen, she said, "If ta lady is na there ye'll na leave ta pread and ta proth, Ewen. Thae McLeods are a' for them-sel's. I hae nae skill o' siccan folk."

"Hersel' is ta lucky lad," chuckled Ewen, as he went towards the clachan with his basket. "Now she'll speak wi' ta lady, and she'll gie her ta letter, and there's nane will pe as wise as we are."

Ewen had seen Grace during her visit at Strathleven, and Grace recognized at once the MacAllister tartan on the messenger.

"I thank you, MacAllister," she said, with a pleasant smile; "this is a grace deed on your part, I suppose."

"Partly sae, my lady. Margery had nae lad to send, and hersel' had a message for you, my lady;" and Ewen gave her the letter, he meanwhile busying himself with Luckie McLeod and the dainties he had brought her.

In a few minutes Grace called him. Even Ewen could see that the letter had powerfully affected her. Her face was flushed, and her eyes gleamed, and her hands trembled violently, as she folded the paper and pinned it carefully in her dress.

"What is your name?"

"Ewen."

"You are a MacAllister?"

"God pe thanket! yes, my lady."

"Where is the person who sent this letter?"

"In her ain shieling, my lady."

"Do you know him?"

"Not when he doesna want to pe known."

"Is he a gentleman?"

"There is nae petter shentleman in ta Highlands."

"Do you know the Maiden's Well in Assynt Wood?"

"I hae kent it fifty years."

"Tell the person who sent you that I will meet him there at four o'clock this afternoon."

"Py yoursel', my lady? he said tat."

"Ewen, if I were your daughter would you let me go by myself to the Maiden's Well to-day?"

"Teet wad she, and gie ye a blessing for going."

"That is sufficient; good-bye," and Grace put a gold piece in Ewen's hand.

"Keep yere gold, my lady; ye will hae a gude way to spend it ere long. Ewen MacAllister ne'er took service-money yet. Hersel' wadna tak' it fra her ain chief."

When Ewen got back to his cot he found a great change in his young laird. Angus had dressed himself with the utmost care, and Ewen thought he had never seen him look so commanding and so comely. In this opinion Ewen was probably correct, for Angus had thrown himself heart and soul into a

great and dangerous enterprise, and its influence over him was distinctly perceptible. There was thought on his brow, dignity in his carriage, and he seemed to have crossed at a moment that invisible yet decided line dividing the light-hearted, careless boy from the thoughtful and earnest man.

“Ta lady will be at ta Maiden’s Well at four o’clock ta-day.”

Angus nodded, and continued to pace up and down the small room. He was full of thoughts, but Grace made but a small part of them. Still, the care he had taken with his toilet showed that he was not insensible to the fact that he was going to meet a lovely woman under very peculiar and romantic circumstances.

Meanwhile Grace went back to Assynt with all speed, and, once in the barred seclusion of her own room, she again opened and read her letter:

“DEAREST NIECE,—You know what you know, and the person who brings you this letter will tell you what it is not safe to write. If he is tall and dark, and bonnie beyond ordinar, and gies you the silver rose you wot of, then you may trust him with all your heart and counsel, and do whate’er he tells you. Dear lassie, if all wins that ought to win, then we will meet, you ken where, and that sooner than some folks will like.

“Your loving aunt,

JANET KILSPENDIE.”

There was a strange, bright smile on Grace’s face as she read, and her after-movements had an unusual alertness; for this message touched something far deeper than the artificial polish and acquired control of a refined education. She went up and down her room humming snatches of forbidden songs, she clapped her small, rosy palms softly and proudly together, and she dressed and redressed herself half a dozen times before it was necessary to leave Assynt for the trysting-place.

When at length she found herself within its cool, shady depths Angus was already there. She could scarcely have seen him first under circumstances more calculated to make a profound impression on her imagination. He looked like some splendid

vision of a romantic knight in an enchanted wood. She was scarcely conscious of anything but this feeling of unreality until Angus had fallen on one knee before her and placed in her hand Aunt Janet's token, the silver rose.

It acted like a talisman on the girl. She kissed it passionately, and, giving her hand to Angus, said, "Oh, sir, pardon me. Bonnie Dundee wore this rose at the Pass of Killiecrankie, and it pinned a hero's plaid at Sheriffmuir. For the sake of one we do not name I am here. Speak to me without doubt and with as much speed as may be."

"We are strangers, Miss Cameron."

"Nay, but we are workers in one grand cause. The white rose of Stuart between us makes us friends."

Angus looked in the lovely, glowing face and caught its fervor. He felt all the new and subtle charm of loveliness, culture, and enthusiasm combined, and to him this white-robed maid, standing among the grasses and ferns, seemed of more than mortal beauty.

He led her to a large rock, and, sitting down by her side, took from his breast a parchment. Over this parchment the two young heads were eagerly bent, and when they raised them it was to flash back into each other's eyes the gathering passion of an overmastering and dearly-loved object.

"See!" cried Angus; "I shall go to Lewis first and rouse the Mackenzies, and they will send the fiery warning through Uist and Barr, and call out the Macdonalds. While they do this I will go through Reay's Land and tell the Mackays and the Sinclairs, and they will let the Ross men and the Athol men know when and where the wrong is to be righted."

"And what am I to do?"

"You are to manage the McLeods; they have been without a leader for long, and are taking to Lowland ways; and you must find a sure messenger to the McLeans, and to Glengarry of Clanronald. The McLeods are doubtful, but you can go unsuspected through their shielings and see how many of them will draw the sword for Prince Charles."

"They will all do it."

"How do you know this?"

"I know what sort of songs their wives sing; I know what king the children are taught to pray for. One of the Stuarts married a McLeod in James the Third's reign. I shall remind them of that, and what Highlandman will fight against his own kin?"

"That is a good claim on them."

"There is none better. The Stuarts have married into many Highland clans. All these clans are sure to come out. But when I have fulfilled the commission I have been honored with, to whom shall I send word?"

Half smiling in Grace's lifted face, he said,

"To Angus MacAllister."

A great wave of color rushed over her cheeks and lily-white throat. "I am very glad," she answered, softly, and then both remained a moment silent.

Grace was the first to break the embarrassment. "What hope is there of the Grants?" she asked.

"Very little. They will side with the German laird; he has gold, and the Grants are 'getting folk.'"

Grace had risen with her last question, and turned her face towards Assynt. She put out her hand frankly. "We are confederates, MacAllister."

"Conspirators, some will call us, Miss Cameron; all the same, we are—"

"Friends!"

And Angus doffed his bonnet and kissed the hand Grace offered him with a homage and respect as sincere as he could have given to the fairest Stuart that ever wore a crown.

Their interview had scarcely lasted half an hour, and had been in the depths of Assynt Wood, but it had not been unobserved. Angus had parted with Isabel Gordon in anger, and she had at first abandoned herself to weeping and despair. But a passive sorrow ill suited her passionate disposition. In half an hour she was following, with the instinct of her race, his

footsteps. She watched him enter Ewen's cot, and waited patiently until she saw him leave it. The abandonment of his gypsy dress and his thoughtful appearance filled her with a presentiment of trouble. She was afraid to speak, but she cautiously followed him to his tryst at the Maiden's Well.

Not daring to approach near enough to overhear the conversation, she had been tortured by what she saw. The splendor of Angus's dress, his bright, eager looks, his gift of the silver rose, had all been observed. But these were not the things at which she was most hurt. "He never bent the knee to me," sighed the girl; "and the way he kissed the tips of her fingers, as if she were Queen of Scotland! He shall never touch my lips again! Did not Borzlam tell me that a hedge-sparrow should not mate with an eagle? I wish I were dead! I wish I were dead! But there's others will die before me!" and, thus muttering, she went slowly back to the tents, jealousy, revenge, and love at that moment dividing all her thoughts.

Angus watched Grace out of sight, and then, replacing his bonnet, stood still a moment to consider where he should go next. His heart turned to Strathleven. Indeed, he would have gone there the previous night if he had not been notified of the presence of Fraser. He feared the lawyer would discover his plans, and use his influence to prevent the MacAllister and Hector joining them. But there comes a limit to all prudences, and Angus felt now that, Fraser or no Fraser, he must see his father and brother. Every step he took towards them made him more homesick, and surely the laird must have had some instinctive perception of his darling's approach. For all the afternoon he had been strangely restless, going repeatedly to the window which overlooked the only approach to the castle, and gazing earnestly down the mountain path.

Just at sunset he uttered a joyful cry. Like the father in the tenderest of all stories, while his son was yet "a great way off" he saw him, and, hastily putting on his bonnet, he went with rapid strides to meet him. Father and son came into the courtyard together, their arms thrown over each other's shoul-

ders ; and then arose a clamor such as had not been heard since that night when the laird and Angus had brought home the bills and charges against MacAllister and made a bonfire of them.

Hector, who had gone a short distance with Fraser on his homeward journey, returned an hour later, and as soon as he entered the courtyard he knew that Angus had come. There was an element of stir and bustle, a sound of laughing and quarrelling, a clash and clatter that was never heard in Strathleven unless Angus was at the bottom of it.

His mind had been full of Angus and of Grace all day. He had talked the matter over again with Fraser, and found him stubbornly set in his opinions ; and he had been thinking of Grace at the very hour when she was plotting treason with his brother. But, heartbroken as he was, he never dreamed of blaming Angus. It was a joy to him to know the lad had come home, and he met him with something more than his usual tenderness, for Angus had been long away, and Fraser had given him some mysterious hints about "a danger he would need much love and wisdom to keep him clear o'."

Even in that first embrace Hector perceived a change in his brother. He watched him earnestly awhile, and then turned away with a sigh. Angus had become a man. He would no more yield to his authority and return his caresses like a child. In that eight months' absence he had gone far beyond Hector in many respects, and Hector was not slow to perceive this.

Generally on his return from any journey, long or short, Angus had been full of story and information. The clansmen had always gathered in the great hall, and heard with delight the recital of his pleasures and quarrels and adventures. But this time he had nothing to say, although, in reply to a direct question from Hector, he acknowledged to having been, not only in Edinburgh, but England and France.

Hector noticed also that there had been some correspondence between the laird and his son of which he was ignorant. It was evident in several remarks which the old chief unintention-

ally made, and then hurriedly passed over; and, in spite of all the excuses a patient love could make, Hector felt hurt, and retired very early to his own room. His heart also was aching sorely about Grace Cameron, and just at that hour life seemed to the young heir of MacAllister a very knotted and tangled skein.

About midnight he awoke out of a sleep, and saw Angus standing at his bedside. He felt him grasp his hand, and heard him say,

“Get up, Hector. I have much to say to you, and I cannot sleep till it is said. Did I not see the angry thought in your heart to-night because of my silence? But it is come to this, dear brother—I have work to do I dare not chatter about.”

“Not to me?”

“To you my heart always speaks.”

“Oh, Angus! my dear Angus! Now where have you been these eight months? Many an anxious hour I have spent for you.”

“But Jasper was here, three, yes, four times, and told you I was all right.”

“Forgive me, Angus, but a gypsy’s ‘all right’ is often ‘all wrong.’”

“Let that be. I have been in France. Know you what for?”

“I am afraid to guess.”

“No need of guessing; I will tell you. I have *seen him—and spoken with him!*”

“Who?” But Hector’s lips were set so tight that the question was hardly audible.

“His Royal Highness Prince Charles Edward!”

Hector leaped to his feet; he could not speak, but he lifted the hand of Angus, and pressed it tightly, almost fiercely.

“Do you wish to know more, my brother? Such knowledge is dangerous, you know that.”

“Oh, Angus! What is he like?”

"Like a king. He has inherited through his mother the chivalry of Poland, through his father the valor of Scotland. If you saw him, Hector, you would do what I did."

"What, Angus, my dear lad?"

"You would kneel and say, 'My prince, here is my sword and life!'"

"And where else have you been?"

"I have carried secret tokens to Moidart and Stewart and Macdonald. Now ask me no more, the news is not my own."

"Only this—does our father know?"

"I had not moved without him. He has sent me gold and counsel through Jasper."

"Alas! alas!"

"Do not fear, Hector; we have friends beyond counting—men and women. There are chiefs serving King George whose wives will raise their clans at the first shout for King Charles—but I am speaking beyond myself."

Hector readily dropped a subject he was by no means prepared to speak about; and, indeed, his own affairs gave him far more anxiety than those of Charles Stuart. After a pause he said, however, "Are the Gordons with you?"

"Carruple Gordon is here."

"And Isabel? Do you still love her?"

"She has led me the life of a slave; I have borne much from her, but I will not bear a rival."

"Has she given you one?"

"Yes, a kinsman of her mother's—a man from Bohemia; a savage with eyes like a polecat, and long, lithe hands that look as if they ached to strangle you. He says his mother came from the far East, and he has a box full of her wrought gold and silver ornaments. He gave Isabel a necklace yesterday. I would not buy her love if I had the gold; and if I had gold I have a better use for it. Let her keep this kinsman out of my reach, I always finger my dirk when I see his scornful, crafty face."

“Don’t soil your dirk with pagan blood, Angus. If Isabel prizes not your love, there are other women—fair, pure women of your own race and faith.”

“I saw such a one to-day, Hector. Oh, how lovely she was! And she is with us, heart and soul. His royal highness told me in France that she, above all others, could touch the McLeods.”

“The McLeods! You don’t mean—you can’t mean Miss Cameron? Her father is a Whig—always has been one.”

“Ah! but Mistress Kilspendie, her aunt, brought up Miss Cameron, and Kilspendie House has been the gathering-place of the Jacobites for thirty years. It is well known that Prince Charles has been there in disguise more than once. Yes, Hector, I mean Miss Cameron.”

“And you have seen her?”

“I saw her for the first time to-day.”

“Where?”

“She met me at the Maiden’s Well.”

“She met you?”

“Why not? I had a token for her that she knew well. Had I known that she was so beautiful I had not scorned at Fraser so about her; but it is o’er late now.”

“Why too late?”

“Because I cannot change my love like a glove that does not fit me. Isabel sits close to my heart, and though she pains me often, I would not have her farther away. But yonder Lady of Assynt is good and fair as an angel; she would suit you bravely, Hector; she is over good for me. Tell Fraser he can draw his papers out, and put your name in instead of mine.”

“Miss Cameron will be likely to choose for herself, I think.”

“That she will! She has taken her own side in politics, and the lassie who is bold enough to choose the king she likes best will choose the husband she prefers. Cameron and

Fraser both may put that in their pipes and smoke it. But good-night, Hector; we will talk more of these things hereafter, only I could not sleep with a shadow between us."

"Good-night, Angus; there shall never be aught but love between us."

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUBICON PASSED.

“Wi’ Highland bonnets on our heads,
And claymores long and clear,
We’re going to fight for Scotland’s right
And the Young Chevalier.

Oh, Charlie is our darling, our darling, our darling;
Oh, Charlie is our darling, the Young Chevalier!”

IF there were wakeful, anxious hearts in the castle, there was at least one wakeful, anxious heart in the gypsy camp. Isabel lay in the door of her tent, watched the stars, and planned schemes of revenge on the Lady of Assynt and Angus. She was aware that, for various reasons, personal and political, her cousin had been a sojourner with her people in disguise, and though she owned no king but the king of her own tribes, and cared nothing about the claims of either Charles or George, she perceived that Angus was in her power if she chose to betray him.

This, however, was an extreme measure, to which she was by nature and education equally averse—he had broken bread in their tents, and trusted them implicitly; he had been open-hearted and open-handed to all, and never scorned to acknowledge his kinship to the Romany. And supposing she could bring herself to inform against him, her father and uncle would despise her for such treachery. It seemed the easier plan to make Miss Cameron suffer, and she never doubted but that in striking her she would strike Angus also. Her grandmother, a shrewd, wicked old woman, would help her. She hated the Gorgios as a race, and always resented the influence Angus possessed over her family as so much honor and obedience taken from her personally.

Even while these thoughts were in Isabel's mind the old gypsy rose gently from her pallet of bracken and came and crouched in the tent door beside Isabel.

"Did you know I was thinking of you, grandbebee!"

"Child, your heart called mine. Do not put a leaf before your mouth. Speak plainly; what is it you want?"

Then Isabel, in a low voice, told all her wrongs. Angus had made a plaything of her love while he had been compelled to stay in their tents, but as soon as he was back at Strathleven he had cast away his Romany dress, he had quarrelled with her about such a trifle as a present from her Cousin Borzlam, and he had met this lady of his own race by stealth at the Holy Well; for Isabel, in her ignorance and superstition, believed that the meeting there was for the purpose of giving some occult sanctity to their vows.

The old gypsy listened with set lips and eyes that gleamed like dull fires. Her hands twitched convulsively, and they were even more evil-looking hands than Borzlam's, for the fingers were flat and bony, and broad at their extremities, like the heads of deadly serpents—fingers that betrayed a crawling and cruel disposition.

"You have made an idol of this Gorgio long enough," she hissed. "Now let me give their pleasure to my ten fingers, and he will never make a fool of a Romany chi' again."

"It is not him I would hurt, grandbebee; it is the girl. You have charms and poisons, slow and sure, that will wear health and beauty away. I would see her grow old and ugly; to kill her is to build your own gallows, grandbebee."

"Child, I fear nothing; my time has not yet come. Take comfort, for I have heard your trouble. They that wrong you wrong me, and it is evil for all who wrong Chuzka."

No more was said. Chuzka sat brooding with her head in the palms of her hands, and Isabel lay down and slept heavily until the sun was risen. Her deep slumber probably soothed her passion, for when she awoke her dominant desire was to see Angus—only to see him once, and give him an opportunity

to explain what seemed so cruel and treacherous. She arranged her long black hair carefully, she put on all the ornaments he had given her and the dress that he liked best, and took the forest road to Strathleven.

She met no one until she reached the little fir wood half-way down the mountain where she had first seen Angus. Among its dark shadows she meant to hide until he passed, for pass he must, since it was the only road to and from the castle. She sat down wearily and sadly under the trees, and began to eat the oaten cake she had brought with her. A little brown squirrel and some robins came to her fearlessly and picked up the crumbs she gave them. She intended to look beautiful, but she could not tell how very beautiful a picture she made as she sat almost motionless, listening for coming footsteps.

But when the footsteps came they did not come from the road, but from the wood, and, lifting her eyes, she saw Laird Hector watching her with a smile both kindly and admiring.

“Good-morning, my pretty kinswoman.”

She was not Hector’s kinswoman, but it pleased her greatly to be called it, and she held out her hand almost gratefully.

“Sit still, Isabel; you make an exquisite picture. I could fancy you some old Roman wood-nymph.”

“I am but a poor Romany girl.”

“You are my fair Cousin Isabel. Are you trysted here with Angus?”

“Angus keeps other trysts, Laird Hector. The Romany girl is a flower to be worn and then flung away for a fresher one.”

“You wrong Angus, Isabel. He loves none but you. He never loved any woman before you.”

She listened gratefully, and kissed with a childlike earnestness the hand which Hector had given her.

“Do not fret for no cause, little one,” he said, sadly; “there are sorrows enough before us all, I fear. Angus is full of cares, and may soon be in great danger. Do not send him away with a sore heart, Isabel. If you have had a quarrel, give him a kiss

ere he go, lest you weep all your life afterward for not doing so."

Then he sent a pleasant message to Jasper and Carruple, and with a smile, the memory of which afterwards pierced her heart like a sword, he left her. For he thought if she was waiting for Angus the lovers would like to make their peace and their adieus alone.

Still, he kept within sight of the mountain path, for he also wished to see Angus. Their conversation of the previous evening had left him in a very unsettled mood, and MacAllister himself had been unusually thoughtful and silent at the breakfast-table. He waited an hour, and then returned to the castle. There was still no sign of Angus's appearance, and the table had been cleared. Had he gone again without a word of farewell?

"Angus is late, father."

"Early, you mean, son Hector. He left the castle at dawn."

"Where has he gone?"

"It will be better to ask no questions for a day or two, Hector; but he has gone among friends, and he will be back with friends before long. You have a big plea to settle with yourself now, my son, and neither I nor any other must prejudice the cause. Judge for yourself; you will be Chief of MacAllister some day not very far off. Look at all sides, and judge for yourself."

"It would be an ill judgment that put us two apart, father. I am your son, and I am your *clansman*. My sword is yours, *my chief!*"

"Then my blessing on you, Hector! But go your ways now, and leave me alone, I have much to think on, and many things to put in order, for I may be going a longer journey than I set out for. But there is One above knows all things."

Then Hector remembered poor Isabel watching and waiting in the wood, and he went back to tell her that Angus had left the castle at dawn, and was probably far on the road to Stornoway by this time. The girl's eyes filled with tears, and her

pale, olive-tinted face flushed to the deepest scarlet. Then she rose silently, folded her plaid around her arms and bosom, and, with a haughty movement, would have passed Hector without a word.

"Isabel, I see you think I am deceiving you, but, upon the honor of a Highland gentleman, I tell you the truth."

"Let me pass, MacAllister! The honor of Highland gentlemen indeed! Some other pledge would be better."

Hector let her pass without further effort to soothe or explain what he judged to be only a lovers' quarrel, for he had far more serious things for meditation than the fanciful wrongs of a love-sick girl. He scarcely thought of Isabel again after he noticed that she took the seaward road to Assynt Wood. It was a much longer walk, but then he thought, with a ready sympathy, "She hopes to see the boat in which Angus is."

Isabel had no such hope; she knew that if he sailed at dawn he was far over the Minch by that hour. Her object was a very different one. She had frequently seen Miss Cameron taking her morning ride with her father on the firm, yellow sands of the cool loch, and she wanted to feed her jealousy with a sight of the fair face so hateful to her. When she reached the sands no human thing was visible, and she muttered to herself, "An evil day and a day of disappointments."

Then she removed her shoes and stockings, and, keeping just within the water-line, walked rapidly onward, the rippling waves constantly washing her finely-arched instep. As she neared Assynt she saw a boat waiting at the little jetty, and a party leaving the castle gates; there were two gentlemen and a lady. One of the gentlemen was Cameron, the lady was his daughter Grace, and the other gentleman was Angus.

A few passionate words in the Romany tongue escaped her, and she stopped a moment as if uncertain whether to proceed or turn back. The indecision was but momentary. She went on rapidly, splashing the water in an idle, childish way to relieve the storm of anger within her. She had plenty of time to observe the party as they approached her—to see Grace's

fluttering white robes and soft brown curls, and the almost caressing bend of Angus's dark, handsome head towards her.

By the time they met the girl's soul had transfigured her face; it was in a blaze of splendid, scornful beauty. She lifted it with a proud consciousness to Angus, and said, mockingly, "May your poor cousin read your fortune, laird? It is an ill journey you take, and much ill to come of it."

"Go back to the tent, Isabel."

"It is an ill journey you take, ill you leave behind you, and ill you go to meet!"

"Isabel!"

She cowered before the anger she had raised, for Angus left his companions and confronted her with a scorn which made hers childish and contemptible. His eyes were more than she could bear, her own fell before their blazing anger. He touched her almost contemptuously, and Isabel threw off the touch as if a serpent had stung her.

"Go back to the tent. Why will you meddle in what you cannot understand? If you linger a moment or say a word I will never see you again. Can you not trust me?"

His face softened as he spoke, and a tender gleam stole into his eyes. Her wild, vivid beauty touched him keenly, and the dark, passionate girl had never been dearer to him than at that moment. But Isabel could see nothing but the look of aversion on Grace's face, and the polite tolerance on that of Cameron.

"You are a traitor," she said, in a low, fierce whisper. The wretched girl meant only that he had been a traitor to her and to her people, but Angus gave to her words a wider meaning. He turned on his heel with a look of the utmost scorn, and in a defiant voice said, "Go, and do your worst. If I could fear you I should deserve to die." Then he made haste to rejoin Cameron and Grace, who had walked slowly on towards the waiting boat.

Isabel stood where he had left her for a moment, as if stunned; then she fled like a hunted deer to the tents in As-

synt Wood. Jasper and Carruple were lazily smoking their pipes. Borzlam lay on the grass gazing up into the trees, and her mother and grandmother sat within the shadow of the tent with folded hands. She slackened her pace as she approached the tents, walked into the midst of the group, and then told, in low and rapid words, the story of her wrong.

The women said little, the men nothing at all, but they exchanged looks that meant more than words could express. Isabel had thrown herself on the ground between her mother and grandmother, and lay sobbing, with her head on the latter's lap; while the old gypsy continuously passed her long braids through her thin, yellow hands, as if she were using them as a charm.

After long silence she rose and said,

"I am an old woman, and years have told me many things. The men who suffer their women to be shamed and wronged are accursed! May they die before their time!"

She sat down again, and no one answered her in words; but, after another long pause, Carruple rose and laid his large, keen knife at her feet; and Borzlam, with a low laugh, took from his pocket a piece of thin, strong cord, and placed it beside Carruple's knife. Then Jasper spoke.

"It is fools who take their revenge in a hurry. It is fools who run into danger when there are others who will do their work for them. A woman in love is a woman who has lost her judgment. There is some mistake. This man and I have stood together in the face of death, and he never failed me. I say there is a mistake. If there is not, am I not of Isabel's blood? No one could strike deeper than I. But why should we do hangman's duty? He has done that against *the man* in London which will put his head over Carlisle Gate. If he has wronged Isabel I will sell him to his enemies; so shall we have both gold and revenge."

But Borzlam laughed low and scornfully, and looked at the old woman. She answered his look with one as cruel as his own. The evil hearts understood each other.

And yet, dark as circumstances looked against Angus, he was not to blame. He had risen before light that morning, and, after a long conversation with his father, had gone at dawn to Ewen's cottage, and eaten his breakfast with his foster-father, as he gave him manifold orders to fulfil. A boat had been ordered to wait for him in a little bay half a mile south of Assynt; but when he arrived there no boat was waiting.

As he paced anxiously up and down the shore, Cameron and his daughter rode slowly towards him. Cameron was going to pay his daily visit to his herring-fleet, and Grace, as was her custom, rode with him. Cameron, as we have seen, was easily attracted by personal beauty, and before they came within speaking distance of Angus he had exclaimed enthusiastically,

"What a splendid carriage! What a fine form! What a noble face! If he is a stranger in—"

"He is no stranger, father. I saw him yesterday. He is Laird Angus MacAllister."

Cameron looked pained and sorry, for a lack of good company at Assynt was his great want. Ere, however, he could make any further remark, Angus was by his side, and, bonnet in hand, had introduced himself in such a charming fashion that Cameron had insisted on him coming up to Assynt, and waiting there the arrival of his boat. The temptation was every way too great to be resisted, and thus it happened that a mere act of courtesy became to Isabel the strongest confirmation of her lover's infidelity.

Both in the gypsy camp and at Strathleven Castle the beautiful month of June passed anxiously and wearily away. The very air was full of rumors that no one could trace to authentic sources. It was whispered that "the Men o' Moidart" were all in arms, and that the government had sent an extra regiment into that disloyal district. A day or two later it was confidently asserted that the red-coats had been cut to pieces near Loch Lochie by the Macdonalds of Keppoch.

At Strathleven there was a restlessness and a note of preparation which Hector found it too easy to understand. The laird

went up and down among his men, and it was evident they were preparing for some martial enterprise. The sheep and cattle were left to themselves, and the MacAllisters were congregated in little camps all along the strath. The drone of the bagpipe and the rattle of steel blended with the shouts of men and the lilting songs of the women in the hay-fields and the crowded clachan.

At length, one night in July, as Hector was moodily walking about his own room, he heard from courtyard and from strath a mighty shout. It flew along the valley, and was thrown back in ten thousand echoes from the surrounding hills. Descending rapidly into the castle yard, he found there a scene of the wildest excitement. MacAllister stood in the centre of a crowd, with his bonnet lifted above his head, and pointing to the mountains and the far islands lying off the coast. A fiery light was rapidly encircling them, and as every fresh mountain-peak grew bright it was hailed with frantic cries of joy and wild clashing of arms. The two pipers were blowing as they had never blown before, the women were running hither and thither, most of them with their children lifted shoulder high. Some were sobbing, some laughing, some singing; thus all seemed to have lost control over themselves.

Hector had no need to ask a question. As soon as they saw him standing by his father's side the enthusiasm found an articulate cry.

"The king's come! the king's come!"

MacAllister looked doubtfully at his son, and a sudden silence fell on the clansmen near. Hector had not yet by word or deed publicly identified himself with the movement. But the suspense did not last a moment. Hector stepped proudly forward, threw up his bonnet, and shouted, "*MacAllisters all! God save the king!*"

The Rubicon was now passed, there was no longer any doubt or hesitation. It was King George or Prince Charles, and men espoused their favorite's cause with a passion of which we can have no conception. Cameron had no objection to Jacobitism

as a sentiment, but he hated it as a fact, the more so that his opinions had been adopted as the result of religious convictions, and were in direct conflict with those of the clan Cameron, who were devoted adherents of the house of Stuart.

When he heard of the stand that the MacAllisters had taken he was greatly distressed, and he wrote to the laird and earnestly requested a friendly interview. MacAllister, in his joy and pride, could now afford to be magnanimous to "the puir Whig laird," and he bid him bring Miss Cameron and drink the grace-cup with him the next night, especially as their mutual friend, Andrew Fraser, would be at Strathleven.

The invitation pleased him well. If Fraser would join him they might perhaps prevent MacAllister and his sons committing any overt acts of rebellion against the house of Hanover; and as for the shouting, that was no treason in a man's own courtyard, while the warlike preparations might well be excused in a country where all loyal men would soon be called upon to defend their homes.

Grace was particularly excited over the invitation; she knew from Ewen that Angus would certainly be at home, and she had good news to tell him. Never had she dressed herself with such surpassing richness and taste, and in this she was not actuated by womanly vanity half so much as by an enthusiastic feeling that she was doing honor to the cause she loved.

Cameron noticed her rich toilet and her unusual excitement, but he attributed it to the pleasure she felt in meeting Hector again. As for himself, the visit, though he had solicited it, gave him great uneasiness. It might bring him under suspicion with the government, and it might end in a quarrel instead of a reconciliation. Still, Fraser was to be there, and he hoped much from the presence of the cautious lawyer.

Fraser was at Strathleven when Cameron and his daughter arrived, and he met them at the gate.

"Gude-day, Camerons, or bad-day, I might as weel say it. I hope you hav na lost your five senses. Strathleven's gane clean daft, laird and gilly, mither and bairn."

"I am on the side I always was, Fraser."

"A vera safe side," answered the old lawyer, with an irrepressible tinge of contempt. Then, turning quickly on Grace, he said, "And you, my young lady?"

"I have come to my senses—all of them, Mr. Fraser," and she looked him steadily in the face with eyes that gleamed and sparkled like stars.

"Humph!" he answered, gruffly, but nevertheless he looked admiringly at her, and added, "You need na glower sae defiantly at me. I'm no the man to say a bonnie woman is wrang, nae matter what side she tak's."

"Come awa, Fraser," cried the laird, who was in exuberant spirits; "come awa. Ye aye had the fault o' hanging round the ladies. Cameron, I'm mair than glad to see you. We'll hae this night thegither if we ne'er hae anither."

The laird was in high good-humor to begin with, but the sight of Angus with Grace and their evident interest in each other's society gave him a sort of triumph over Cameron that added a very keen relish to his satisfaction. Cameron also noticed, and that with some astonishment and anxiety, that Angus and Grace had wandered off together to the extreme edge of the castle wall, and that they leaned long over it in earnest conversation. He would have been more astonished if he had heard its tenor.

"Glengarry will be there. The McLeans are sure. The Men o' Moidart and Clanranald will rise to a claymore."

"And the McLeods?"

"Not so sure. But the men who don't go will have little peace in their homes; their wives will make their hearthstones hotter than a battle-field. I met Grant the other day, and I asked him which king he was for."

"'I have not decided,' he said, 'but I think Charles Stuart has little prospect of getting his crown back.'"

"What did you say?"

"That Prince Charles had more hope of his crown again than Grant of Grant had of getting back his dirk. His face

grew black as midnight, but I courtesied and smiled and said, 'It is in the belt of Angus MacAllister, you know. Will you make an expedition to recover it?'

While they were laughing over this incident Hector joined them. Something in Grace's manner to Angus had given him hope. She looked at Angus admiringly as a sister might look at a brother, but she shyly glanced at Hector. She chatted freely with Angus; she blushed and answered in monosyllables if Hector spoke to her. And Hector liked her blushes and embarrassments, and the short silences they shared together were sweeter and dearer than the gayest words she gave Angus.

Cameron and Fraser came to the dinner-table very anxious. MacAllister had stubbornly refused to speak about political matters. But after dinner he suddenly changed his mind. Without a word to his sons and guests he went into the court and gave an order. Very soon there was the noise of gathering men, the clash of steel, and the stimulating music of the pipes.

Fraser became restless and excited. "Stop that noise, will ye, MacAllister? A man is na accountable for what he says and does when ye stir his blood up wi' steel."

"I'll stop it if ye'll come into the court with me, and I'll show ye a sight that will mak' you and Cameron fifty years younger."

They all followed the chief, Cameron somewhat protesting, but submitting himself to Fraser's guidance. The soft, sweet July gloaming glorified the valley and the great hills, rising one above another till they touched the skies. The yard was full of Highlandmen armed at every point. There were eight hundred men, standing in ranks close and firm as a granite wall. MacAllister looked at them proudly, and, followed by Fraser, Cameron, Grace, and his sons, stood bareheaded in the centre of his clan.

Cameron looked round uneasily, but Fraser whispered, "We are fair trapped; I would na try to win through this circle o' steel for a' the kings in Scotland, and they say there's *twa* of them. Tak' it easy, man."

"Gentlemen," said MacAllister, bowing to his guests and then to his clansmen, "you hae asked me more often perhaps than was quite polite what side I am for. Listen, then, heaven and earth. I and my sons are for Prince Charles. Heart and hand, siller and land, and life itsel'!"

A shout that filled and thrilled the whole strath answered him.

"If any man among you is for King George, let him step out and lay down his arms. None shall blame him or do him harm. He is welcome to go to his shieling and his herding again."

No man moved.

"The MacAllisters are all King Charles's men, then?"

"Eh! are we. Heart and hand, siller and land. Life itsel'."

Then Hector, stepping forward, said, "MacAllisters, you have my pledge. I follow my king and my chief, my father and my clansmen. I draw my sword for the royal Stuart. Laird Angus will tell you he is worthy of your faith."

And when Angus lifted his bonnet and came to the front there was a new and powerful emotion. Old men that had been but stern and earnest relaxed into smiles, and the younger were hardly restrained from breaking ranks and crowding round him. There was a magnetism about the youth that drew all hearts to him.

"Thee has seen ta prince!" shouted Ewen; and Angus, taking up the cry said, "Yes, I have seen Prince Charles Stuart, and spoken with him. And through me Prince Charles trysts you to meet him on the nineteenth of August in the vale of Glenfinnin. Will you be there?"

A great shout of assent was the answer, and before its echo had ceased Grace Cameron walked proudly forward. She raised her head, and then bent it east, west, north, and south.

"I am for Prince Charles," she said, in clear, sweet tones that thrilled every heart. "He has no truer subject than Grace Cameron."

"God bless you, lassie? If Hector and Angus come home again, ye may tak' your choice o' them. MacAllisters! your

homage. It is honor enough to bend to beauty and worth!" And the old chief lowered his bonnet till it touched Grace's little shoe.

"I maun get out o' this; I maun get out o' this," said Fraser, restlessly. "Miss Grace, ye hae done a vera foolish thing; but I honor you. I mean it's vera imprudent indeed. MacAllister, ye maun break your ranks, I'll no be coerced into going for Charlie. It's finable by law, MacAllister; and me and my friend Cameron protest, as much as we are able, against these proceedings."

"Ye are a very poor 'protestor,' Andrew Fraser;" but MacAllister smiled, and, taking an arm of each of his guests, he begged them to come back to the castle and spend an hour with him. "It may be our last together in this world," he said, solemnly; "we'll part friends, please God and you, gentlemen."

Cameron was greatly moved; deeper than all his prejudices, perhaps deeper than his convictions, lay that strong vein of sentiment and romance rarely wanting in a true Scotchman. He respected his daughter for daring so publicly to avow her sentiments. Her beauty and enthusiasm, touched by the air of chivalry and the soft glow of the summer evening, had given to her countenance a strange beauty. He had not been able to refuse her a glance which assured her of forgiveness, if not of approval.

"MacAllister," said Fraser, fretfully, "you are na fit company for sensible men. If I had na kept my senses ye wad hae had John Cameron as daft as yoursel'. I saw the light in his een. And whatna for should we fash our heads anent kings? They dinna do it about us."

"But you'll have to choose one side or t'other, both of you. Choose to-night, Fraser."

"I'll do naught sae daftlike. I'm clear for being on the same side wi' the hangman, sae I'll wait and see what side he is to tak', and then I'll decide. Cameron can do as he likes, but if he'll tak' a wise man's advice he'll gang his ways out o' tempta-

tion. Strathleven is just the maist unhealthy place I ken o' at the present time."

Cameron, smiling, rose, and offering his hand, said, "MacAllister, kings did not make us friends and kings shall not part us. We may pull together in many a boat, though we don't sail together in this one, and I must get Grace home. She fell completely under your spell, and nae wonder; I cannot blame her. But I must take her home before she says words that may be set to my account hereafter."

He walked to the window and looked out. Grace stood in the centre of the MacAllisters, Hector and Angus by her side. The young men were rapidly cutting off knots of white ribbon, and Grace as rapidly pinning them on to the plaided warriors, who each in turn knelt before her.

Cameron bit his lips and turned away. Fraser said, "I dinna care. She's a noble lass, and she's right too—that is, I mean, she thinks she's right. I wish I was forty years younger, I would mak' her Mistress Andrew Fraser if I was the biggest chief in the North Countrie!"

"'Deed in that case you would have had to do battle with me," said MacAllister. "I would hae had her in those days, if I had taken a thousand men and carried her away. Cameron, if we never meet again, there's my hand. He is a gude man that is father to a lassie like her. God bless her!"

And few men ever went to rest so dissatisfied with themselves for doing right as John Cameron did after that parting dinner at Strathleven.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GYPSY'S REVENGE.

“Sweet is revenge—especially to women.”

“If we do meet again, why, we shall smile,
If not, why, then this parting was well made.”

CAMERON'S dissatisfaction in the morning was of a different kind. He perceived that he had placed himself in a very suspicious position, and the course which he knew to be the most prudent was one which he disliked exceedingly to take. To remove himself and Grace from all communication with the rebels and to show himself in the company of those well affected to the House of Hanover was now his obvious duty, but he feared to leave his nearly completed industries to the mercy of lawless men, who would only be too glad of any pretext for plundering a stranger. Prudence urged him to leave for Edinburgh at once; interest urged him to delay a while and see whether Prince Charles was really able to inaugurate a campaign.

While he was walking anxiously about his garden, pondering these questions, on the following morning, he saw Fraser approaching him, and no sight could at the time have been more welcome.

“Cameron,” said Fraser, shaking his head dolefully, “we went a daftlike gait yestreen, sae I hae come to tak' counsel wi' you. Twa heads are better than ane, even if they be fools' heads.”

“I was thinking I ought to leave for Edinburgh to-day—but here comes Grace. Now, Fraser, hold to what you know to be wise, and do not let her throw a glamour over your good sense.”

“Ow, ay! It tak’s mair than a woman to beguile Andrew Fraser. Gude-morning, Miss Grace. You are a sight for sair een and sair hearts too, I trow. If you grow any bonnier I’ll hae to tak’ an oath no to look at you.”

“I am very suspicious of a lawyer’s flattery, Mr. Fraser. What do you want me to do—make promises, or sign papers, or go back to the house and leave you and father alone to plot treason against me?”

“No, indeed. I was only going to ask you to go your ways peaceably to Edinburgh as fast as possible. It is na safe for decent folk to be north o’ Dunkeld thae days. I’m going to set mysel’ in the eyesight o’ the Lord President Forbes. I must stand right wi’ him.”

“Stand right in your own eyes and your own conscience, Mr. Fraser. If you do that you will get ready for a march to Glenfinnin. You are trysted there, *as well as the rest of the Frasers.*”

“Then, young lady, I’ll keep no such tryst. I hae far mair important affairs to attend to. Let me tell you, you laid your bonnie head down on the block yestreen. If Charlie* fails—and fail he must—you’ll find yoursel’ atween four walls, and then I’ll hae the fleiching and pleaing to get you out.”

“Grace, we must forget the folly of last night, and you must leave at noon with me for Edinburgh.”

“Dear father, that is simply impossible. I am ill; I have a dreadful headache, and how can I leave without attending to the house and my packing and the servants, besides a score of things in the village?” And Grace, under the influence of a sudden and severe paroxysm of pain, was compelled to leave the room.

“Now, Fraser, what am I to do?”

“You’ll hae to go yoursel’ and leave her for a few days. She has made up her mind to hae brain fever or paralysis if it is necessary, and that auld Dr. McLeod is as big a Jacobite

* Charlie is not a mere familiar form, but the Erse or Gaelic form of Charles.

as hersel'. He'll say whatever she bids him. Mak' as gude terms as you can wi' her. Eh! but she's a bonnie woman, and a bonnie woman must hae her way."

"I thought it took more than a woman to beguile Andrew Fraser."

"Hout, man! I'm no beguiled. I ken just what the lassie is going to do, I ken just what she has been doing. She has some little affairs of her own to sort. You need na worry anent them. There is as much love as loyalty in them. That's the way wi' women-folk; they aye mix their politics and their love-affairs together. Give her a few days; she'll be ready for Edinburgh in a week at maist."

"Then I shall have to come back for her, and the journey—"

"The journey is hard, and you would rather not; but when men hae gotten women-folk in their hames they hae to tak' many a step they would rather not. A' things have their price, Cameron."

"You think I ought to go to-day?"

"Go at once. Yonder matter o' last night will be carried by some bird o' the air. I should na wonder if Duncan Forbes asks you a' particulars as soon as he claps his een on you."

"Then he will ask what I shall not tell. No one should force me to betray the friend whose bread I have broken."

"And they'll find it hard wark to get evidence out o' an auld lawyer like me. I'm no an observant man; and I had drunk mair Farintosh than was prudent that night. I would na be a competent witness. Maybe I'll hae to tak' an admonition fra' the Kirk Session, but they are mercifu'; ony way, they air mair mercifu' than Quarter Sessions and the Duke o' Cumberland."

So Cameron went alone to Edinburgh, it having

"If you could only get round their wives you would do a better business. The McLeods are only half-hearted 'Charlie's men.' Their women buckle on every broadsword."

"Ah, weel! I was aye noted for my skill o' women-folk. I'll gang through the clachan; they'll no out-talk me; nor buckle my broadsword on, I'se warrant."

"How stands MacAllister this morning?"

"Just in the maist dangerous place he can find to stand on. He called me a 'puir bit Whig body' this morning; and I'll no tak' *that* from onybody."

"But you are a Whig."

"Ay, and I'm a sinner, a meeserable sinner likewise—but I dinna let folks call me names."

"What excuse has he for rising? George was a lenient master to the MacAllisters. Their fine was not a heavy one, and they have been 'out' in every rising."

"They dinna acknowledge King George's right to fine them a bawbee, sir. MacAllister said to me this vera morning, 'Fraser, we Highland gentlemen can stand cold, hunger, thirst, pain, poverty, anything but a master. We'll hae nae little German cock-laird telling us what we shall do and what we shall not do. Charles Stuart is our clansman and our born chief, the lawfu' head o' our clans; and we'll obey him. Next thing to having our ain way is to die fighting for it.'"

"The MacAllisters are an old and honorable family."

"The auldest and the maist honorable in the world according to themselves, Cameron, and that is what troubles me. I begged Hector to tak' nae active part in the rebellion, sae that he might ony way keep the land thegither and carry on the family."

"But Hector would never do that?"

"No, he just touched his sword and laid his hand in his father's hand. Then auld MacAllister was that conceited and triumphant and aggravating that I could na thole him ony langer; sae I cam' my ways o'er here, and here I'll stay till Miss Grace gets o'er her headache and has all her brows packed."

Fortunately Grace's headache did not terminate either in brain fever or paralysis. She was able to go through the village next day and quietly undo all that Fraser had effected with the women of the McLeods. There was not one of them that she could not move with her own enthusiasm, and many a stalwart McLeod dreaded more than the perils of the deep or the bloody battle-field his wife's scornful looks, her contemptuous pitch of the fishing-nets, and her scathing words.

Fraser hung on the outskirts of Strathleven, but he did not go up the mountain. He knew that Laird Angus was riding nearly night and day, and that he was constantly bringing in parties of men from the mountainous recesses of Ross and Caithness. The youth's ardor, his beauty, and his martial spirit drew men from the lonely valleys, from the depths of the Reay forest, and from the almost unknown hamlets on the low, sandy beach of Dornoch.

Prince Charles had promised to meet the clans at Glenfinnin on the 19th August, and it was now drawing near that date. For several days Fraser had heard of parties going southward under their various leaders, and he was getting very impatient to leave a neighborhood so dangerous and so suspicious.

"We maun win awa to-morrow, Miss Grace," he said, positively; "the country is full o' Highlandmen, and when they are out for a fight they are out on a frolic, and I dinna care about being invited to join them."

"Very well," said Grace, with a sigh; "the MacAllisters leave in two days; we can have their escort a part of the way."

"Not for a' the gowd in Scotland! Ye dinna trap an auld fox like me that way, young lady. I'll no march a step wi' Charlie's men, nor I'll no let you do it, either."

"Mr. Fraser, you are not talking to a Perth jury."

"Miss Grace, forgive me. I'm losing my senses, I believe. I'm no used to women-folk; dinna get up beyond my humble acknowledgment. I'm your maist obedient servant, and I'll do whatever you tell me to do; only if it wad please you no to put my puir auld head in peril o' the gallows."

“Very well; then we will go to-morrow. And what way we will go I shall decide when to-morrow comes. To-day we will visit Strathleven, and bid them all a God-speed on their journey. You are not afraid, are you?”

“Me afraid! And what for, I wonder? I hae papers MacAllister must sign before he leaves, and I trust a Scots lawyer may gang anywhere wi’ a ‘last will and testament’ in his hand.”

So Grace dressed herself with extreme care and beauty, and rode over to Strathleven. It was amusing to see how proud he was of her, how gallant and attentive to all her small pleasures and comforts.

“It’s a sair charge to hae a bonnie lassie on your heart night and day, Miss Grace,” he said; “but it has its compensations; I’ll allow that.”

“Thank you. I wonder if Lord Hector is at home?”

“Hearken! Is na that his voice?” for just above them a strong, clear voice was singing,

“Come through the heather, around him gather,
You’re a’ the welcomer early;
Around him cling with a’ your kin,
For wha’ll be king but Charlie?
Come through the heather, around him gather,
Come Ronald, come Donald, and a’ thegither,
And round him cling with a’ your kin—”

“*For wha’ll be king but Charlie?*” joined in Grace, with a passionate melody that brought Hector instantly into sight, and that greatly at his peril, for, waving his bonnet, he scrambled down the steep mountain-side to meet them.

They all went to Strathleven together, Hector walking beside Grace’s pony, and Fraser following the young couple, and indulging himself with many a sarcastic, though good-humored, speech. MacAllister met them with great delight; he loved Grace, and he had quite forgotten his quarrel with Fraser. But there was a solemnity and gravity about him which was natural and becoming in a chief, who was not only leaving—perhaps

forever—his home, but who was also taking with him more than a thousand men to share the dangers of the enterprise.

Fraser and the laird had much business to transact, and they remained together all day. Towards sunset Fraser sought out Grace and Hector. He found them leaning over the castle wall, watching the stir and listening to the music and calls of the camps in the valley.

“Bairns,” he said, tenderly, “I maun stay wi’ my auld friend to-night. He has been saying many things to me that have broken up bygane sorrows, and I canna leave him; and I would na leave him for a’ the men in Scotland, nor lasses either; sae, Hector, you’ll convoy Miss Grace safely to Assynt. I maun stay wi’ MacAllister, and forbye I want to see Angus, and he’s no hame yet. But Ewen says he’ll be hame sure and certain, sae I’ll stay, and you maun be ready by daylight in the morn. I’ll be at Assynt for you. I wonder where Angus is?”

Ewen could have told him, but Ewen did not choose to do more than give a positive assurance of his young chief’s arrival, for Ewen knew that Angus was with Isabel Gordon; and though he would never have admitted that he disapproved of any lady Angus honored, he did seriously object to her in his own heart. “Put there’s na need to say aught,” he thought; “many a lassie is loved tat is na wedded.”

Angus had returned early in the evening, and had been told by Ewen of the visitor at Strathleven; but though he wished to see Grace very much, he could not bear the thought of leaving Isabel, perhaps forever, with anger between them. He did not go to the tents, for he knew that Jasper and Carruple were away, and he had no desire to meet Borzlam, so he sent Ewen to bid Isabel meet him at the Maiden’s Well.

The spot he selected pleased the poor girl very much. It was not a spot sacred, in his memory, to another woman, or he would not be waiting for her there. She dressed herself carefully, and went, almost trembling, to meet him. For she knew that her beauty was dimmed with tears, anger, and neglect; and she had not seen Angus since that morning on the sands,

when she had called him a "traitor," and he had so sternly ordered her out of his presence.

She had even ceased to hope that he would see her again; she knew that he was going to danger, and perhaps death, and what was a poor Romany girl to a man whose heart was fixed on high enterprises and matters of kings and crowns? So she had at last become outwardly passive, and her grandmother had watched patiently this mood, feeling sure that one of despair and revenge would follow it.

Neither did Isabel's actions, after Ewen's visit to their tent, deceive her. She knew from the light in the girl's face, from her careful toilet and her long absence, that she had gone to meet Angus. With tottering steps she sought out Borzlam, who was grooming his favorite horse fifty yards away.

"My son, that outrageous, infamous Gorgio has sent for your cousin, and your cousin has gone to him. What is the use of words? Has there not been enough already?"

"Mother, there has been too many. It will be a dark night, and no time comes better."

"You have a wise head. See your hand fail not."

Borzlam laughed low and wickedly.

"Take your sleep; I dreamed of blood last night. Mother, I make my dreams come true."

She looked significantly at him. He put his hand to his throat, and then on his hip; and, with a parting nod, she left him, and went and sat down in the tent door, with a patience that contemplated its reward.

While this interview was going on, Isabel had neared the Maiden's Well. Angus was sitting on the rock where he had sat with Grace, waiting for her. He had been thinking of the various ways in which Isabel angered him, and of what he should say to her about her peculiar faults. But when he lifted his eyes, and saw her pale, penitent face, he forgot all but his great love for her. He stood up, and cried "Isabel!" and in a moment she was nestling in his arms, all faults forgiven and forgotten.

That night he spoke to her as he had never spoken before. He told her that, different as their stations were, she was the one woman on earth for him. Parted by an accident of birth, they were, all the same, twin souls, and no other love should ever divide his heart with her. Then he pointed out to her that, though her aunt had gone straight from the tent to the castle, times had greatly changed, and therefore, before he married her, she must prepare for her position. And Isabel, usually so proud and tenacious of all her Romany customs, agreed cheerfully to all he said, and promised whatever he asked.

Never had they been so happy together; and when Angus, ere they parted, put on her finger a splendid betrothal ring, Isabel believed herself to be the most happy of women. During this interview Angus had made her understand the risks of the enterprise in which he was engaged.

"I shall make you a countess, Isabel," he said, "or I shall fall upon the battle-field. If I die, Lord Hector will always be your protector and friend."

"Lord Hector!" she said, gently. "Ah, how good and patient he was with me that dreadful morning! I shall never forget how sorrowful he was for me; but if you die, my lord! my love! Isabel will never leave her tent again."

The interview—a very sweet and a very bitter one—was lengthened out as long as possible; then Isabel went weeping to the tents, and Angus took the road to Assynt. He thought it possible he might meet Fraser and Miss Cameron returning; and, if so, Hector would doubtless be with them, and they could be companions home. But when he reached the seaside he saw no sign of any one, so he suddenly changed his mind, and turned towards Strathleven.

It was then quite eight o'clock, and he met Hector and Grace at the foot of the mountain. Something in his own heart told him that it would be kindness to plead fatigue, and not return again, and he found that Grace and Hector accepted his apology very pleasantly. So he went up to the castle, and finding

Fraser and his father shut up together, he sat down on the wall to dream of Isabel and the future.

Hector and Grace had taken the seaward road to Assynt, and, in many a weary, painful hour afterwards, Hector remembered that witching ride upon the cool, hard sands. The waves made a scarcely audible murmur, and the soft, gray light was just sufficient for him to see the love-laden eyes drooping and flashing at his side. As they neared Assynt they slackened rein, and a great silence fell between them. Neither seemed able to break it; they rode without a word through the scented garden, dismounted, and passed together into Grace's sitting-room.

"Farewell!" whispered Hector, as he stood holding her hands, and then he was conscious that a tear had dropped upon his own. He could no longer control himself; he gave voice to his heart, and, in words which came he knew not how or whence, he told the love which had so long possessed him. And then he knew that Grace was weeping at his side, and that he was kissing away her tears, and calling her by the dearest names.

He had again to say "Farewell," but this time it was a "farewell" so mingled with bliss and hope that he could rise above its sorrow—"and we shall meet in Edinburgh within a month if all goes well," he whispered.

"All must go well," she answered; and then with a sudden movement turned away. "For I will not watch him out of sight," she thought; "ill-luck follows those who are watched out of sight, and they come back no more."

It was then quite dark, for the clouds hung heavy and near, and it was evident that a thunderstorm was at hand. But Hector saw no clouds or coming storm; to him all was light and joy; and he put his hand proudly and impatiently on his sword.

"*For her sake,*" he thought; and if there had been a lingering doubt in the young soldier's heart about the justice of his cause, he forgot it in that hour. "Oh, how beautiful she was!

How good! How loving! No man had ever been so happy! He must tell Angus." And then he remembered that he had yet a long ride to take.

With the thought came a sudden chill, a terror, a nameless something that he had never felt before. It was as if his own wraith had flown back to him, crying, "Beware!" He looked involuntarily behind him, and saw a dark, crouching object. The next moment he was only sensible of a fierce, choking sensation, of being dragged from his horse, and of a sharp, fiery pain, which he knew instinctively was the lunge of a knife.

At this very moment Angus, sitting on the castle wall, musing on coming events, fancied he heard a wild, piteous voice cry, "*Angus! Angus MacAllister!*" It seemed to come from everywhere and from nowhere. It was no mortal voice; he never thought it was. It filled the dull, heavy air with its clamor and wail, but only Angus heard it. He shivered from head to foot, but he set his whole soul to listen. A strange fear came upon him, as of some impending disaster. Again he seemed to hear a low, sobbing, inarticulate cry, like the dying effort of a soul struggling for life. Was it Hector that needed him?

In a moment Angus leaped to his feet and called Ewen. "Six men, fully armed, Ewen, are wanted. There is mischief abroad; we must go to the help of Lord Hector."

They had scarcely reached the strath ere it began to thunder and rain as it only can do among the mountains, but Angus walked steadily on. He knew not where he was going, but, impelled by an overpowering instinct, went forward, and his men trusted him implicitly. The rain fell more heavily and the storm beat more wildly as they approached the sea. Suddenly Angus's quick ear detected a sound that he knew on the sands.

"Listen, Ewen; what is that?"

"Tis hard to hear aught at all through ta hurly-purly, but hersel' thinks it pe a horse."

"It is;" and the next moment a horse, half wild with terror,

approached the party, and solicited their attention with an almost human persuasion.

"It is Hector's horse, Ewen ; and there is blood on his nose ; I feel it. Oh, my brother ! my brother !"

There was a deep, fierce cry from the men, that seemed to be literally cut in twain by a shrill, sharp shriek that evidently came from some woman's heart torn by agony and fear. Angus stood still.

Another and another shriek, each louder and wilder than the other, and with the last a vivid flash of lightning that showed him a woman flying along the sands and almost upon their party. She saw them also, and cried out, "Fly for the MacAllisters ; fly for your lives !"

"MacAllisters are here !" shouted Ewen, for Angus was stricken silent by the new horror that had forced itself upon him—the woman was Isabel !

"Oh, my lord !" she screamed, taking hold of Angus ; "oh, my Lord Hector ! They have slain Angus ! they have slain Angus ! He lies bleeding to death at the point below."

"Isabel, I am here."

"Angus ! Angus ! But they said it was you. Alas ! then it is Lord Hector, the kind, the good Lord Hector !" And she fell heavily against Angus.

"Isabel ! Isabel ! be brave for my sake. You must not faint now. You must show us where Hector lies. Haste ! haste !"

She took him by the hand, and even his mighty step could scarce keep pace with her. Ewen and the men followed as best they could, being guided by the shouts of Angus as he went on. In a few minutes they had reached the poor prostrate body, lying there on the wild, wet sands, beat upon by wind and rain, and almost within a yard of the advancing tide.

Angus could not speak ; his grief was unutterable and mixed with stormy thoughts of vengeance. Still, he remembered at once what must be done. "Here is my plaid, Ewen ; carry Lord Hector in it. Oh, sorrow-woven plaid to be my brother's bier !"

The men laid the young lord in the plaid, and so, as in a hammock, gently bore him home, making as they went a lament that mingled with the wild storm, and as they neared Strathleven wailed loud and shrill above it. MacAllister, sitting with Fraser, was the first to hear it. He was in the middle of a sentence, but he turned pale to the lips, and, almost running to a casement, flung it wide open.

“It is the coronach! the coronach of the MacAllisters! Fraser, it is a chief’s coronach!” and then, in a fainting, deathlike whisper, *“Angus! Angus!”*

Fraser too had started up, and now he went as tenderly to MacAllister as a woman could have done. “MacAllister, it is the hand o’ God, and you’ll no shrink from under it. Whatever your sorrow is, come and meet it like a man that *has a God* to help him.”

They went slowly out together, meeting as they did so the clansmen and women running into the great hall from every quarter, and there, on its wide hearthstone, lay Lord Hector—his first-born, his heir, his pride.

A great groan went up from the chief, and Angus held him against his breast and tried to comfort him. Meanwhile a poor girl, with clothing torn and dripping, had knelt down beside the body and was feeling with breathless eagerness the heart. “He is not dead! he is not dead!” she cried, and the next moment she had forced open his lips and poured into them a few drops from a vial she plucked from her breast.

In another moment she was crying out for herbs and bandages, and Angus was obeying her orders with a rapidity and confidence that inspired every one else. No surgeon could have stayed the bleeding or dressed the wound with more skill, and every one kept silence and watched her movements. Twice, thrice she repeated the drops she had at first given Hector, and at the third time he faintly sighed and moaned.

“He will live,” she said—“he will live if you will suffer me to watch and nurse him;” then, falling at the feet of MacAllis-

ter, she said, "My lord, your grief is my grief. You know me; do not send me away."

"Poor Isabel. Stay, my daughter, and save Hector if you can. What say you, Angus?"

"Hector is safe with Isabel; she and I will watch him together to-night."

Then the hall was quietly cleared, and Angus and Isabel sat down by the unconscious man, while the chief and Fraser moved to the other end of the room.

Angus then pointed to a deep, purple mark round Hector's neck, and whispered "*Borzlam!*"

"Yes."

He set his lips, and, pointing to the wound in the side, said "*Carruple?*"

"No, Borzlam."

"Why?"

"He thought it was you."

"I shall kill him, Isabel, even if it parts us."

"It will bind us firmer. He ought to be killed."

"How do you know it was Borzlam?"

"I heard him tell grandbebee. They tried to catch me, but I fled too fast. Borzlam will kill me too, now."

"You must stay here—till he is captured."

"He has fled doubtless; he knows that Jasper or Carruple would kill him."

"I will tie him to a tree, and every MacAllister shall fling his dirk at him. That is our punishment for an assassin."

Towards morning the wounded man had a few moments of consciousness, and he used them to urge on the chief and Angus no delay on account of his misfortune. "Where is my sword?" he asked.

Angus put it in his hand.

"Call Neil MacAllister."

A splendid-looking youth, armed at every point, entered, and bent on one knee beside his leader.

"Neil?"

“My chief! My dear chief!”

“Here is my sword. You will use it for me—a stainless sword. Kiss me, Neil.”

“My chief! My chief!”

But Hector had become again unconscious, and, though the march was delayed some hours, they were compelled to leave him without any more definite hope. Fraser promised to remain, and Isabel could be relied on for all that skill and loving care could do. Her positive assurances of saving his life somewhat comforted MacAllister and Angus, who had some knowledge of the medical skill of the Romany women, but over the rest of the clan there was a shadow that it was difficult to disperse.

The men left about seven o'clock; at eight the strath, which had been so busy, was silent and deserted, and the castle, that yesterday was running over with armed men, and noisy with all the tumult of military life, was now only tenanted by half a dozen old women, the dying laird, the gypsy girl, and the old lawyer.

About this time, also, Fraser remembered Grace Cameron, and his promise to call for her early.

“Now I’ll hae a pretty kettle o’ fish to boil,” he said, querulously; “she’ll be for coming here, and I’ll hae twa women quarrelling about the puir lad; and John Cameron, he’ll be deaving me wi’ letters, and Duncan Forbes and thae Whig gentry will be misdoubting me. Them that hae put on a white cockade and followed Charlie will hae a mair comfortable time nor me. But I’ll se do my duty, and I aye had a vera commanding way wi’ women-folk. They’ll hae to do what Andrew Fraser thinks they ought to do—’deed will they! That’s ane comfort.”

CHAPTER IX.

A PRINCE'S SUCCESS AND A GYPSY'S DEATH.

“He is come to ope
The purple testament of bleeding war.”

“To every evil-doer comes the evil day.”

BEFORE Fraser could decide as to the course to be pursued with Miss Cameron, that young lady arrived at Strathleven. Ill news travels quick, and she had heard at daylight various rumors, some of which represented the young chief as actually dead. Fraser's heart ached at the sight of her white, piteous face, but he met her with a pretended reproof: “Why did you no wait at Assynt, Miss Grace? You kent I would come or send advices. This sorrowful house is na the place for you.”

“Oh, Mr. Fraser, it is just where I ought to be. Is Hector dead? Tell me the truth.”

“I'll never lee to a sad heart, Miss Grace. MacAllister is na dead, but he is little like to live.”

Then Grace threw her arms around Fraser's neck and wept. Her tears wetted the old man's face, and he could not help soothing and comforting her almost as a mother might.

“Hush! hush! my bonnie wee woman! There's hope o' him yet. He's young and strong, and he'll mak' a hard fight for his life—and I think he'll win; I do, surely.”

“Fraser, dear Fraser, you must let me stay here and help you to take care of him. You must not say ‘No,’ for I am his promised wife.”

“That is no way to win at me, Miss Grace. I had sorted you for Laird Angus, and I dinna approve o' young leddies taking these solemn matters in their ain hands. It is na right.”

“Oh, Fraser, I must stop! I will not be sent away; and I told Dr. McLeod to come. He will be here in half an hour, and—”

“He’ll no win in, not a single step. Laird Hector’s wounds hae been dressed, and that by ane that kens mair than a’ the doctors in the country.”

“Very well; then we will send McLeod back again; but you will not send me back? Let me stay; I will do all I can to make you comfortable. I can cook nice things, and keep the rooms tidy and still, and help you in a hundred ways. And you know how dearly I love you, and I’ll do everything you tell me, and—and—” The rest was lost in tears and sobs, while Fraser for a few moments was compelled to support the trembling, weeping girl, who had thrown herself upon his neck.

“’Deed you shall stay, my dear. Hector will be the better o’ your presence, and I’m no denying but what you will be an extraordinar’ comfort to me.”

“I knew you would say so at last. How could you help it, when your heart is so good and tender? Is the doctor with Hector now?”

Fraser looked decidedly embarrassed. “Ow, ay, the doctor is there, and likely to be there.”

“Can I go in and see Hector? Say ‘Yes,’ Fraser. Go and ask him.”

“Well, I will go and ask. Mind! you will hae to do whatever the doctor says; but she’s a kindly lass.”

“What are you saying? Who is a kindly lass?”

“The lass that dressed the wound and is nursing him.”

“Who is it?”

“Just the gypsy girl, Isabel Gordon.”

“Fraser, it is shameful! I will not have her nursing Hector, and I won’t stay under the same roof with her.”

“There is no call for you to do sae, Miss Cameron, nane at a’; but Isabel Gordon canna leave the laird; and, what is mair, she should na leave him for a’ the fine leddies in Scotland.”

“How can she cure Hector’s wound?”

"You maun set a gypsy to cure a gypsy wound. McLeod would let the lad slip through his fingers in four-and-twenty hours; Isabel will gie him every chance he has, and she's no going to be meddled wi', and I'll tak' care no one does meddle wi' her. Sae put on your bonnet, my bonnie young leddy, and gae back to Assynt. You'll hae the best o' society there, nae doot."

"Please, Fraser; please, Fraser, let me stay! I will say no word to the gypsy, bad or good."

"'Deed, if you stay, you'll hae to treat her like a leddy should do."

"I will do so; I will indeed."

"And you must speak kindly to her."

"I will do so, Fraser."

"And whatever she says is to be done."

"Certainly."

"She is mistress and maister too in the sick-room. If she says you are to leave it, or that you must na speak, or the like o' that, she maun be obeyed instanter."

"I will do whatever she says."

"And you'll no quarrel with each ither?"

"I will not say an angry or disagreeable word."

"But womenfolk hae a way o' looking vera angry and disagreeable things."

"I won't do it, Fraser. Try me for two days."

"Vera weel; I'll try you. Now gang awa to the room you had when you stayed here before, and wash the tears aff your bonnie face, and then you shall mak' out my tea; I'm needing a cup badly."

Grace went reluctantly up-stairs, but she judged that she had pressed Fraser quite far enough at that time. Her maid had already unpacked her clothing, opened up the room, and made some arrangements for her mistress's comfort. She was, however, full of complaints and gossip. "There was na a decent servant left in the castle; the best women had gane to the fields to gather in the hay, and the old crones wha had taken

their place could do naething but croak about Charlie and Mar and Dundee."

"Are there no young women here?"

"Only ane, and she wad be better awa; a gypsy lass that cam rinning through the storm like a madwoman, and went on about Laird Hector as if he—"

"Hush! Do not dare to name the girl in my presence." And Grace remembered with scorn and anger the scene which she had witnessed between the girl and Angus.

Fraser had watched her up-stairs with a smile of great satisfaction. "It tak's Andrew Fraser to manage a contrary woman," he said, complacently; "it's an unco pity I never got married mysel'; there wad hae been *one woman* properly guided ony way. Now I maun gae and speak yon little pagan fair, but she'll be easy managed, nae doot."

He went into the hall, where Hector lay in a restless and feverish unconsciousness. Isabel sat on the floor by his side. She took no notice of Fraser's entrance until he stood beside her, and then she only looked up and laid her hand upon her mouth; but when she perceived that he wished to speak to her, she arose noiselessly and followed him out of the room.

"Isabel—Miss Gordon, an' it please you better—there is a young leddy here who, in some sort, has a right to be here, and she wants to see Laird Hector."

"Miss Cameron?"

"Yes; Miss Cameron."

"She cannot come in."

"But I'm thinking she'll insist on it."

"I shall go away, then."

"You'll do naething o' the kind, Miss Gordon."

"You are right. I promised Angus to stay by him, and I will."

"But, Miss Cameron?"

"She cannot come in here; I won't have her; I won't see her. Let me go, I am too long away now." And Isabel silently but peremptorily closed the door on Fraser and went back to her watch.

“Now what’ll I do? I’d rather hae a jury o’ stubborn Moirdart men to mak’ agree than twa women. That gypsy is a wilfu’ lass, and she’ll hae to hae her way; the doctor is abune the lawyer in a matter o’ life and death.”

As he stood musing on this and other matters Grace touched him. She had put on a pretty morning-dress, and her face was now calmer and tearless. “Your tea is ready,” she said, caressingly; “the salmon is broiled to a turn, and I have made you an omelet with my own hands.”

“You dear lassie! I’m wae to hae only ill news for you. Now, dinna faint; Hector’s nae worse; it’s the doctor that won’t hear tell o’ your seeing him, and we must hae nae quarrelling or disputing.”

“But surely you—”

“I’m naebody in this matter. She as gude as ordered me out o’ the room. You’ll hae to beck and bow to the gypsy if you want your way. But you will ne’er do that.”

“Indeed I will.”

“She does na like you, that’s easy seen.”

“I will make her like me. When you have finished your breakfast go and stay by Hector, and send her for a cup of tea; she must need it.”

Fraser willingly did this, and Grace, concealed by the window-curtain, saw the girl enter the room. She seemed to be utterly exhausted, and yet she flung herself face downward on the sofa in a passionate abandonment of grief that had something terrible in it.

Grace went slowly to her side. Such sorrow drove all meaner feelings before it. She forgot her jealousy and scorn, and only saw before her a woman—a child, rather—bowed to the ground in overwhelming anguish. Suddenly, moved by some tender and noble feeling, which she never questioned or reasoned with, she stooped down and kissed the small, olive-tinted hands clasped above the bowed head. Isabel turned her head instantly and, smothering her grief, tottered to her feet.

Grace tried to take her hand, but she shook her head proudly.

“We are sisters in sorrow; do not turn away from me. You are weak and faint; let me make you some tea.”

Isabel did not seem to hear. In a kind of blind, dazed way she took a few steps towards the door and then reeled and fell. Grace made no outcry; she called her own maid, and together they tended her until consciousness returned.

“I have been ill?”

“You fainted, Isabel. Do not move yet. I will bring you bread and wine, that is what you need. Nay, but you must take it—for Lord Hector’s sake.”

She crumbled the bread into the wine and ate it greedily. “I was hungry, I had forgotten that. Now I can go.”

Grace let her go without a word. She was sensible that she had made a greater impression on Isabel than the girl would at once admit. Three days afterwards she came again into the parlor for some refreshment. Grace prepared the meal with her own hand, and then sat down to share it with her. Inadvertently she had made the very advance Isabel could understand.

“We have broken bread together,” she said, slowly; “shall we be friends?”

Grace rose and kissed her, saying, frankly, “I should like it very much.”

A little later, as she passed the door of the hall, Isabel called her softly. “He is conscious, would you like to see him?”

“Oh, Isabel, it would make me so happy!”

“Come.”

In another moment Hector, lifting slowly and painfully his heavy eyelids, saw the face he loved best on earth bending over him. He could not speak, but he drank in life and light from the dear eyes looking into his. That night Grace and Isabel shared the watch together.

“It is a great comfort to me,” said Fraser, when he heard of the reconciliation; “for I may say I hae been living o’er a barrel o’ gunpowder. Women hae a wonderfu’ way o’ behaving in my presence. If I had married, and brought up daughters, they wad hae been greatly sought after.”

But, in spite of the reconciliation, time passed very uneasily to Fraser. Lord Hector's condition was still one of the most imminent danger; any moment some fatal change might take place; and he had heard nothing from MacAllister, though the chief had promised to send a trusty messenger back in a few days.

In the meantime the whole country was in commotion. There was scarcely an hour in which the sound of pipes did not give notice of the march of armed men through the strath or over the mountains; and Grace had told him, "with her head in the air," as he said, that a goodly number of the McLeods, indignant at the supineness of their chief, had chosen a leader from among themselves, and gone to meet Prince Charles at Glenfinnin.

But about two weeks after the departure of the MacAllisters, as Fraser was chafing himself into a fever, he was told that a "gentleman" wished speech with him. The gentleman was a fine-looking Highlandman, with a brisk and hearty manner.

"Gude-day to ye, Maister Fraser. I'm glad to see ye."

"Gude-day to you, sir, and if ye bring gude news, then I'm glad enough to see you, though I neither ken your face nor your name."

"I am Andrew MacAllister, a near cousin o' the chief's—God bless him!"

"Ye hae a gude name, and dootless ye are worthy o't. Now, what's your news?"

"First, ye maun tell me how Laird Hector is."

"He is like to do weel, and he is weel cared for; ye may tell MacAllister that. Now, where is the chief and his men?"

"In Perth."

"I'm no for asking aught anent the rebellion, but I canna help you telling me if ye like to do sae, Andrew MacAllister. Folks maun talk over their toddy, ye ken. Ye left here on the nineteenth, did ye no?"

"Earlier, lawyer. We were at Glenfinnin on the morning o'

the nineteenth. Ye should hae seen us coming down the brae in twa columns o' three men abreast, and the pipes playing like they were mad wi' joy. The Camerons were there before us, and the prince and his company."

"I'm not asking, but I wonder what next."

"The Marquis o' Tullibardine flung out the royal flag to a gude Scotch wind; a bonnie flag it was, a' o' red silk, but a space o' white in the middle o' it. What a storm o' pipe music! and what a cloud o' skimmering bonnets! and what a long, long shout there was! Oh, lawyer, ye ought to hae been there!"

"Tut, tut, man! I might hae liked it, but there was nae 'ought' in the question."

"Then cam' the Macdonalds o' Keppoch, and some o' the McLeods, and the next day we began our march. At Lochaber we were met by the Stuarts o' Appin and Ardshiel, and by Glengarry and Gordon, and small parties from the clachans on the road, and so we made for Corriearrack, where General Cope was waiting for us."

"Did ye fight Cope? I mean, I wonder if he stayed for a fight."

"Cope run awa afore we come nigh him; he thought it best to sleep in a whole skin;" and the man laughed so heartily that Fraser had to purse up his lips very tight in order to preserve a decent composure.

"Then cam the Frasers."

"Ou, ay, I kent they'd come!"

"And the McIntoshes."

"Every ane o' them!"

"And we went like a torrent down Badenoch and the Vale of Athole."

"'Twad be a grand sight!"

"And at Ruthven we met Cluny McPherson. He had been out for George, but as soon as he saw the prince he left his red-coats and went back hame to raise his clan for Charlie. He could na help it; ye never saw a prettier man than the prince."

"I wonder now!"

"'Deed he is. There's nane can beat him either in running or wrestling or leaping, or even wi' the broadsword. He sets the men's hearts on fire wi' his bravery, and the women's wi' his beauty."

"Cam ye by Athole?"

"Ay did we; and stayed twa days in the duke's castle o' Blair Athole. Lord Nairn cam' up wi' us there, and Nairn and Lochiel went to Dunkeld and proclaimed King Charles there. But eh, man! You should hae seen us enter Perth!"

"Nonsense! I daur say ye made but a poor figure."

"Poor figure yoursel'. The prince wore a splendid suit o' tartan trimmed wi' gold, and the Duke o' Perth, and Oliphant o' Gask, and handsome Lochiel, and the chief o' the MacAllisters walked by his side wi' their bonnets in their hands; and the Perth men a' shouted, and the women cried wi' joy, and the prince he bowed east and west, and looked like a king wha had come to his ain folks again."

"Perth was always Stuart mad."

"What for not? The Stuarts aye loved Perth. Were they not a' crowned at the Palace o' Scone? Now, Mr. Fraser, I maun awa; the chief bid me haste, and my heart is na here, I trow."

"Tak' anither glass and go. Men are aye in a hurry to run into danger. Gie MacAllister my duty and my assurances, and tell him a' things are like to do weel. And if you see Fraser o' Achnacarry ye may gie him my respects, and say, if he is in need o' a little matter o' siller or gold, his good cousin Andrew will be glad to let him hae it. Helping a kinsman is na aiding and abetting a rebellion, I hope. And I'll no hae the Frasers go amang ither folk and want aught fitting for an auld and honorable family. If that's treason the lairds o' session maun mak' a bill o' it."

Then the two men shook hands heartily, and Andrew MacAllister went down the mountain, singing—

“Geordie sits in Charlie’s chair,
Bonnie Laddie! Highland Laddie!
Had I my will he’d no sit there,
Bonnie Laddie! Highland Laddie!
Keep up your heart, for Charlie fight,
Bonnie Laddie! Highland Laddie!
Come what will, you’ve done what’s right,
Bonnie Laddie! Highland Laddie!”

✓ The little news that Fraser had heard only made him eager for more; he was as restless as a caged animal. “Here I am, shut up by my ain kind heart in a rebel’s castle wi’ twa women and a wounded man,” he said, querulously, to Grace, “and there’s plenty o’ men in Perth needing my gude counsel this day.”

“But if you are ‘suspected’ you know how to clear yourself.”

“I should hope I do. I dinna keep a’ my friends booked on the same side o’ the house. If George wins I hae the ear o’ Duncan Forbes, the best Whig that ever lived; if Charlie wins I hae the heart o’ MacAllister, the noblest Jacobite that e’er drew a sword from its scabbard. It is na mysel’ I’m worrying for; it’s ither folk, and I wish I kent what ither folk are up to.”

But for another two weeks no reliable information reached them. Cameron, indeed, had sent several letters, but they referred mainly to family affairs. He had been obliged to submit to the separation from his daughter; several causes independent of Hector’s condition made it necessary. In the first place, a defection of a large number of the McLeods—now his tenantry—might be adduced against him, unless he remained in Edinburgh to support the government by his presence and means. In the second, it was unsafe for any lady to traverse the country; Sir John Cope had gone north to meet the rebels, and the rebels were pouring into the south by a hundred different roads to meet their prince. Again, Edinburgh was the hotbed of Jacobitism, and if Grace were there she would almost certainly do something to bring herself and him into trouble.

It must be remembered that Lochaber, where the rebellion had formed, though only one hundred miles from Edinburgh, was really as little known to the Lowland Scotch and English as a part of the Russian empire. They were aware that in the Highlands of their country there dwelt, among wild mountains and broad lakes, tribes of men who lived each under the rule of their own chief; who wore a peculiar dress, spoke an unknown language, and went armed even about their ordinary avocations. They had also occasionally seen little companies of them following the droves of black cattle which were the sole export of their country—gigantic men, plaided, bonneted, belted, and brogued—driving their bullocks with an air of great dignity and consequence. Yet very little indeed was known of them, and the communication between the Highlands and Lowlands was so uncertain and dangerous that even such a matter of importance as the landing of Prince Charles was for more than two weeks a subject of uncertainty.

There was little wonder, then, that the lonely castle of Strathleven heard so few echoes from the noisy, fighting world outside its barrier of mountains, and that, with the exception of the news brought by Andrew MacAllister, nothing reliable was heard for nearly five weeks after the departure of the chief. By this time, however, Hector's case was more hopeful. He was conscious, and Isabel had permitted him to be lifted from the floor to a more comfortable bed. But his condition was still very precarious, and life was absolutely dependent on a care and watchfulness that never ceased.

It must be admitted that it had been a month to try the most forbearing affection. Hector had hardly been able to understand, much less acknowledge, the tenderness lavished upon him. Fraser, in spite of his attempts at gallantry and self-control, had been very irritable and restless, and the friendship between Grace and Isabel was by no means a demonstrative one. The gypsy girl had no confidences to make, and often sat hour after hour so perfectly motionless by her patient's side that Grace felt her immobility a kind of torture.

But on the twenty-fifth of September men were seen approaching the castle; Fraser went out to meet them, with a glad yet anxious heart. The leader had his arm in a sling, and he was only followed by two gillies, but it was evident that he was a gentleman; and when he drew near the gates, Fraser knew him.

"Forres, I am glad to see you. What brings you here, man? How's a' wi' MacAllister?"

"All is well with them. How is Laird Hector?"

"Laird Hector is nae worse, and he's some better; but what's your news?—and what's the matter wi' *you*? Come awa in and rest yoursel'. I'm fain, fain to see you."

"'Deed, I got into a fight wi' ane o' them no-to-be-bided Crawfurds, and I hae gotten a sair wound. I'll no hold a sword again for a week, and MacAllister told me, if I wad come and see you, there's a lassie here would do mair than a' the doctors in Edinburgh for me. Sae I came."

"And glad am I. Where is MacAllister?"

"He's whar he ought to be—wi' the prince."

"And whar is *he*, man?"

"*In Edinburgh!*"

"Dinna lee, for ony sake, Forres."

"Prince Charles is in Holyrood Palace. My een hae seen that gude sight, if they never see any ither."

"Bide a wee, Forres; there's a leddy here maun hear that news;" and Fraser went with a most disloyal haste to Grace's parlor.

"You'll no heed my not chapping at your door, Miss Grace, for— Oh, Grace, my lass, what think ye? Yonder young man is in Holyrood Palace!"

"Prince Charles! Say it again, Fraser."

"Nae need. He is there dootless. Now, dinna gang daft, and dinna deave me wi' crying and laughing. Ye ken weel that I'm deid again the Stuarts." But Grace had flung her arms around his neck, and was kissing him for joy and exultation.

"I must tell Hector; I must, indeed I must!"

"I dinna think he has strength to put this and that together, but you may try;" and with this permission Grace bent over the pale and apparently sleeping laird.

"Hector, beloved," she whispered, "Prince Charles is in Holyrood."

A bright light leaped for a moment into the heavy eyes, and the white, haggard face flushed rosy red. There were a few words more of whispered joy, and then Isabel kindly, but peremptorily, placed herself between them. Grace understood, and submitted cheerfully; she was too happy to be offended; and with a bright smile she was passing from the room when Isabel, white and tearful, arrested her.

"Have pity on me. What news have you?"

"God forgive me! How could I be so thoughtless? Good news, Isabel! Prince Charles is in Edinburgh."

"What care I for Prince Charles? It is Angus; my Angus!"

"He is well."

Grace spoke with a sudden coolness, and Isabel turned proudly away. An hour afterwards Grace met her, and was amazed at the change in the girl. Her face was alight, her eyes burned like stars, her lips were slightly parted, as if she were singing to her own soul, and she walked with a light, elastic grace that had more of joy in it than many a dance. For Isabel had seen Forres, had dressed his wound, and received a message and a token from Angus.

Forres was likely to be detained a week, and as he was a young gentleman of some rank and education, Fraser found his society a great relief to the tedium of his life, and it was with a keen sense of the blessing of good company that he mixed his toddy the night of Forres's arrival, and sat down to talk "o'er things."

He was just considering how best to get at all the facts of the rebels' march to Edinburgh when Forres startled him by saying, "You knew the man who intended to murder the young chief of MacAllister?"

"Yes, a gypsy, called Borzlam."

"He has been killed."

"Killed! Wha by?"

"The MacAllisters."

"Tut! tut! they should hae left him for the hangman. I'm not pleased at Laird Angus for that."

"Laird Angus did not soil his dirk with him. The poor, pitiful scoundrel went to Edinburgh wi' news that he meant to sell to George's men. James MacGregor was there for our side, and he heard the whole story. They left the secretary's office thegither, and Rob Roy's son was na the man to lose sight or hold o' sic a double traitor. He brought him safe to our camp, and he was condemned as a spy and a traitor. Then MacAllister stepped out and claimed the right o' life and death o'er him, and he was given up to them whom he had sae deeply wronged."

"MacAllister did not kill him, surely?"

"No. The meeserable creature crawled to Laird Angus's feet, and begged like a slave for his life. Laird Angus spurned him awa wi' scorn and loathing, and ordered him to be tied to a tree. 'Had you slain my brother in a fair fight,' he said, 'I would have drawn my own dirk and killed you like a man. Assassin! traitor! spy! die an assassin's death.' With that he looked at Ewen, and Ewen flung the first dirk at him."

"Did he say aught?"

"I would rather not tell you what he said."

"Ah, but you must. It would be an ill thing to say so much and no more. I ken something o' these pagan creatures. They can face the inevitable if they hae to do it."

"This Borzlam faced it with a storm of curses.

"*'Your prince shall be hunted like a fox and die like a beast!*

"*'Cry the coronach for the last Chief of MacAllister!*

"*'I see a battle-field in which Highlandmen shall be trodden like clay!*

“*Fire shall go through Lochaber, and widows shall sow a handful of corn!*”

“Laird Angus was sorely tempted to strike him silent, but he walked scornfully away, and the clashing o’ knives and the cries o’ the clansmen drowned his evil words. But it was a fearful sight; I liked it not.”

“Nor do I like to hear tell o’ it. They should hae let the law and the hangman deal wi’ him. Honest men willna like to be stabbit in a fair battle-field wi’ such dirty dirks. There was mair harm than gude done.”

“Likely; for the MacAllister wouldna camp near him, and they moved twa or three hundred yards awa, and left him where he died. And I happened to be captain of the watch that night, and I saw what I like not.”

“Maybe ye had a dream, man.”

“You’ll no affront me that way, Fraser. I dinna dream on watch. I saw an auld woman steal round our men, spread out her arms, and cry sorrow on them. I knew not the words she said, but they seemed to draw from north and south and east and west everything evil. I declare I ’most fancied I heard the dark air stirred by flapping wings, and felt them trailing on the ground beside me. Prince Charles will never win, I’m feared; though he has a’ the right to win.”

“Yes, he has rights—as a lawyer I’ll allow that. But they hae lapsed, Forres. He is o’er late wi’ his plea; and naebody can mak’ the mill grind with the water that is gane past it. He is just thirty years too late—that is as gude as forever.”

“And yet I canna think it. You should hae seen him when he entered Edinburgh. I’ll ne’er forget him riding down the Duke’s Walk to the palace. His bonnet o’ blue velvet was decked wi’ a band o’ gold lace and a white cockade, and o’er his tartan coat he wore St. Andrew’s star. Around him walked a band o’ auld Hielandmen—every ane o’ them had fought at Sheriffmuir for his father—and they kept turning up their sunburned faces to him wi’ such love and reverence that I could look at naught else but them. You’ll no believe me, but it’s

true as truth itsel'—his vera boots were wet and dimmed as he passed along, wi' the kisses and tears of those who followed him."

"I'm glad I was na there. I am that susceptible, Forres, I daur na trust mysel' in bad—I mean, in dangerous company."

"But for all that and all that, Fraser, I wish I had na seen that evil figure!"

"It was naught at a' but Isabel's grandmother. She went to steal awa Borzlam's body, dootless. It wad be gane in the morning?"

"Yes, it was gone. We were glad of it."

"Nae doot. And as for any woman, good or bad, witch or saint, bringing ill where God has na spoken it, that's impossible. God does na leave the issues o' war, and life and death, to witches and auld gypsy wives. Put that in your pipe, Alexander Forres, and smoke it, then ye may gang to your bed and sleep easy."

But ere Fraser followed his own advice he looked in at Hector quietly sleeping, while Isabel sat beside him, and Grace stood looking out of the window o'er the moonlit strath. He motioned to Isabel, and she came to him.

"Isabel"—in a whisper—"Borzlam is dead."

"Did Angus kill him?"

"No."

"He should have done it."

"He had small grace and he deserved none. Assassin and traitor both."

"Hush! When the dead are spoken of they come to listen, and the vengeance of the dead is terrible."

"Weel, weel, I'm no his judge. God be merciful to a' his creatures! How is Hector?"

"He will live. He is sleeping himself back to life."

"That will do to sleep on. Gude-night, little woman."

CHAPTER X.

THE DEATH OF THE MACALLISTER.

“A mocking king of snow.”

“Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast, no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise or blame, nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.”

CAMERON himself brought the news of the great rebel victory at Preston. The battle had been fought on the 22d of September, but it was towards the end of the first week in October when Cameron reached Strathleven. The weary gentleman climbing the mountain road was a glad sight to all in the castle, and Fraser's eyes were full of tears when he clasped Cameron's hand at the great gate.

Grace was very glad also, but her joy had at first an element of fear in it. Had the prince failed? And were there no longer two sides for men to take? She feared to ask a direct question, and her father was really so much more interested in Lord Hector's condition that he forgot to volunteer any information.

“How is Lord Hector?” he asked, anxiously, as soon as he was alone with Fraser.

“He's out o' danger, I think; mair by token that he has been worrying himsel' and ither folk to-day anent his velvet suit and laces. He's fretting, too, after his servant, Roy, who, he says, is the only ane in the country wha can sort his hair and tie his cravats. I think he would rather hae gien Prince Charles his sword than his valet.”

“It is a good sign, Fraser. For my part I like to see a man

careful of his appearance; it is a mark of respect to himself and other people also. Can I see him?"

Hector had been prepared for the visit and was anxiously awaiting it. Isabel had permitted him to be slightly raised on his pillows, but he had scarcely strength enough to lift his thin, white hand, and lay it in Cameron's.

"MacAllister, my dear, dear lad, this is a sore sight," and Cameron, who had really loved the handsome youth from the very first hour of their acquaintance, could not restrain his emotion. The tears rolled down his aged face and dropped upon the young laird's hands; and then Grace, for very sympathy, wept also, until Hector, with a look, drew her head down to his and kissed the tears away.

"Cameron," he whispered, "will you give me your daughter?" and Cameron, for answer, put Grace's hand in that of the suppliant, saying, as he did so, "MacAllister, you shall be as my own son to me, only get well, and then we will talk more of the matter."

No one had noticed the gypsy girl. She stood in the window, watching the meeting with a face that betrayed not the slightest interest in it, but she felt keenly the passive neglect with which Cameron had treated her. As he left the room she gently followed, and, touching him on the shoulder, she said,

"Have you seen Angus MacAllister lately?"

"Laird Angus MacAllister, my good girl."

"I am none of your good girl, Maister Cameron, and if Angus MacAllister is laird o' yours he is none of mine. He is my plighted husband. Is he well? You might answer a civil question."

"He is well, I believe."

He was greatly annoyed. The proud, passionate girl, in her outlandish dress, with the large golden hoops in her ears and the queer gold beads on her neck, roused in him a feeling of dislike. He had all a Scotsman's pride in his family connections, and he looked forward with no pleasure to the prospect

of finding this strange woman the sister of his beautiful, high-bred daughter.

The first remark he made to Fraser was on this subject, and he was still further annoyed to find that the wise old man inclined to regard Angus's choice as a very proper one.

"Ye canna judge a woman by her earrings and her beads, man; and for the rest she is gude and bad, as a' women are; as a rule they are about evenly mixed. Ye canna deny that she is bonnie enough to turn any lad's heart inside out."

"I really did not look at her."

"Then, man, you made a great mistake. It is a kind o' duty to admire such beauty as Isabel's wherever you see it. You arena competent to judge the lass till you hae looked in her een and watched her ways—kindly, womanly ways—fu' o' grace and skill. I'll own that she has a temper—a' women worth aught have tempers—but she has saved Laird Hector's life, and that is what nae doctor in Scotland could have done."

"I heard that from Forres, but I scarcely believed it."

"Oh, man, if ye had heard ill o' the lass, ye would have opened both your ears to it. Where there is a woman atween gude and ill report put her on the gude side, Cameron. Do it for your ain mother's sake. Besides, it's no likely all the gude women are in the Cameron family."

"Well, well, Fraser, we have other things to talk of to-night. The rebels have won a wonderful victory at Falkirk, but I give little for it."

"Is na it worth as much as if George's red-coats had won it?"

"No, I think it is not. The young man is not gaining adherents as fast as he ought to do, and he is surrounded by bad advisers and difficulties of all kinds. He has no more chance of final success than ever he had. If beauty and bravery and the matchless courage of his Highlanders could stand against the whole power of England, he would win; but it is hopeless, hopeless!"

“And he has won a fair battle, eh?”

“Yes, there is no doubt of it. I have talked with some who were present. They said he made a splendid figure on the battle-field. He was brave as brave could be; and there is no kind of doubt that he is very handsome, even among the handsome, stately chiefs surrounding him.”

“And Cope is weel whipped?”

“Have you any spite at Cope that you should look so satisfied at it? Cope understands the art of war, but what men ever bore such a downhill charge as the Hielandmen made at Falkirk? Fraser of Achnacarry told me they rushed on the royal army like a raging, roaring torrent. There was one discharge of their muskets, and then the lightning swords flashed out from the tartan cloud, and smote with irresistible fury all before them. The Camerons began the battle.” And, in spite of his loyalty, Cameron’s eyes filled, and he involuntarily drew himself up, with a proud smile.

“The Frasers would be on the right wing; they hae had the post of honor ever since Bannockburn.”

“The Frasers behaved splendidly.”

“That’s auld news; they always behave splendidly on a battle-field. If the warld was only a battle-field, they would be among the saints o’ the earth.”

“Young Donald Fraser, of Glensarg, was killed leading on his men.”

“He owed me a thousand merks; but I’m glad I let him hae them.”

“The magic yonder Charles Stuart exercises over these men is wonderful? When Fraser fell he raised himself on his elbow and cried to his men, ‘Charge! every man o’ you! And look ye, my lads, I’m not dead! I shall see if any o’ you fails to do his duty!’”

“I’ll hear no more o’ it, Cameron. Puir Donald! I wish I had made him tak’ ten thousand merks. He shall hae a monument, the best money can buy him, that shall he! Where is Charles Stuart now?”

“Holding his court in Holyrood Palace. Edinburgh has lost its heart and senses o’er him—the ladies in particular. President Forbes says he cannot get a man of sense to act with him, because to act against the Chevalier is to lose their mistresses or incense their wives.”

“You hae seen Forbes, then?”

“Yes; I got letters of protection from him for myself and you; but he counsels you to leave Strathleven at once. He will not be answerable for royal troops in the stronghold of such a rebel as MacAllister.”

“It’s a far cry to Strathleven, Cameron. When I hear o’ George’s men in Lochaber I’ll decide whether I’ll winter here or no. Folks should na count their chickens till they are hatched. Are you going to stay at Assynt?”

“Yes; and I must have Grace with me.”

On this point Cameron was positive; neither tears nor entreaties could prevail, and Grace was obliged to leave Hector entirely in Isabel’s care. She disliked to do so very much; she was jealous of her influence, even while she acknowledged that she had no ground for such jealousy. But the girls had never thoroughly trusted each other, and Grace’s kindness had had, perhaps, an unavoidable flavor of patronage and condescension, a feeling which Isabel intensely resented.

“Good-bye, Isabel. You must come to Assynt when Lord Hector is able to be moved there. I shall be glad to see you.”

Isabel smiled faintly. “I could not come as a guest, and I am the daughter of a race who serve not.”

“Do not be proud and misjudge me, Isabel. You will take care of Lord Hector?”

“I should have done that if you had never come here. I shall do it all the same when you are gone.”

But Grace fancied she was glad to have her go, and she turned her face homewards in a very reluctant mood.

“Cameron ought to hae stayed here,” said Fraser, as he watched them down the mountain; “there’s nae fear o’ red-

coats at Strathleven, but he'll find out his mistake ere lang. That lass o' his has left her heart here, and I would na gie a fig for her presence without it. Forbye, she always thought a gude deal o' Andrew Fraser. Cameron should na set himsel' up for everybody in the warld, it's no to be looked for!"

Fortunately, the winter was favorable, in so far that much less snow than usual fell, and the road between Assynt and Strathleven was generally open to travel. But it passed wearily enough away, and Fraser was often inclined to think that he had proved his love for MacAllister in a manner which dwarfed into insignificance all possible pecuniary obligations. However, Hector was getting well. During the latter part of December he was able to sit up an hour every day, and Isabel had promised that the return of spring would see him in the woods and on the sands again.

During these winter months Isabel gained a very warm place in Fraser's heart. He dearly loved his comforts, but he loved them doubly from a beautiful woman's hands, and there was something in the almost Oriental submission of Isabel that greatly flattered him. In her own tents Isabel had seen women ever the proud and willing handmaids of the men connected with them, and Fraser was waited upon and watched with an attention which gave everything and demanded nothing in return. He had no need to trouble himself to be amusing or polite; Isabel would sit contentedly hour after hour in perfect silence, yet always ready to talk to him if he showed that he desired it. Her behavior, upon the whole, caused him to have a very high opinion of the Romany women, and he told Cameron "that if ever he married he would tak' a look through their tents, for he'd seen no ither women sae likely to suit him."

The life of Strathleven and Assynt during this winter really centred at Strathleven, for at frequent intervals Cameron and Grace came there, and such visits often lasted for at least a week. Cameron and Fraser generally spent a large part of these days with a map of the two estates before them, and their talk was of

sheep and herring-boats, and pounds, shillings, and pence. Grace, with some pretty piece of needlework in her hand, sat by Hector's side, and their talk was of themselves generally, though not unfrequently they had political events to discuss which had interest enough to entirely engross their speech.

For Cameron kept up a constant communication with Edinburgh, and thus, however tardily, was made aware of the chief movements of both armies. The descent of Charles into England in October, his conquest of Carlisle, his victory at Falkirk, and most of the details in connection with these great events, were rejoiced over and discussed in various moods and ways by the four people whose interests were so bound up with them.

Isabel took no part in these conversations. She listened intently at first, but when satisfied, from their general tone, that no ill news had been received of Angus, she remained wrapped up in her own thoughts and busy with her own employments. For into the girl's life had come a motive noble and difficult enough to employ all her energies—a determination to make herself worthy of the youth who loved her so truly.

She had opened her heart to Hector on this subject as soon as he was able to sit up and converse with her, and Hector had seconded her wish with all his power; so many an hour that would have been inexpressibly tedious to him had been greatly brightened by teaching Isabel. How she humbled her proud little heart to be corrected and even smiled at! What efforts she made, and what difficulties she conquered! But the task once undertaken was faithfully fulfilled; she was learning to read and write from Hector and Fraser, and she was learning also to assimilate her dress and manners to Grace Cameron's, in a proportion which showed a great natural sense of beauty and fitness.

Thus, amid doubts and hopes and continually conflicting reports the winter passed, and spring was in the straths again. In early April Hector was able to walk between Fraser and Cameron to the castle wall, and once more look over the beautiful hills and valleys, green in the first tender glory of spring. But

all was painfully still; the plaided men that had filled the clachan and the hills with noisy life were gone; and in spite of the green turf and the cloudy haze of bluebells there was an air of desolation contrasting frightfully with Hector's last remembrance of the same scene--the courtyard and strath full of armed men, the clash of steel, the music of pipes, the jubilant authority of his noble old father, the gay, joyous chivalry of his beloved Angus. He turned away his head from the scene before him and went into the castle, feeling as if he had come back to life in another world.

He began to observe now that Fraser and Cameron were unusually anxious, and that Grace's eyes bore constant marks of weeping. He knew that Prince Charles had been compelled to retreat northward, and that the Duke of Cumberland was following him, with an army capable of overwhelming by its numbers the five or six thousand brave Highlanders whose devotion had survived the battles and fatigues of a nine months' arduous campaign. So the spring's beauty and song seemed to Hector a mockery; no one around him was in sympathy with it. Fraser and Cameron were silent, Grace irritable and uncertain, the old women in the kitchen full of dreams and portents, while the younger ones in the clachan were heavy with direful presentiments, and hung about the castle waiting and watching for news in a way which unreasonably annoyed Hector. Isabel's manner also attracted his attention; the book and work that had been her constant companion now lay untouched on her chair; she wandered about restlessly, and her great, sorrowful, eager eyes had the look in them of one who watches for evil, and yet dreads and deprecates it.

One evening, about the middle of April, Cameron and Grace, accompanied by Fraser, were riding slowly between Strathleven and Assynt. Just as they reached the sea-shore Fraser noticed a man leave the sands and plunge into the underwood of Strathleven Forest. Something about the man seemed familiar, and impressed him at once unpleasantly. "He is either a bad man or a bad messenger," he thought, "and I have a great mind to

go back to Strathleven." Yet he rode on in uncertainty until he reached Assynt, and then a sudden determination seized him. "Cameron," he said, "there is evil abroad, and it touches Strathleven. I know it. I must go back again."

"Then I will go back with you."

"No, you must not. You might see what you would hate to mak' mention o'. Folks that can keep ears and een shut thae days are the best kind o' friends."

"You surely don't think—"

"I'll no tell my thoughts. Cameron, for the love o' God, see no puir fellow that is fleeing for his life. It's easier shuttin' your een than tellin' a lee. Oh, Cameron, we're auld men—we maun be mercifu'—we maun be mercifu'!"

"Fraser, come what will, I'll do what's right."

"Ay, ay! I ken that, John Cameron—but whiles, it is mair Christian-like no to be righteous overly much. Gang to your room, and your bed if need be, and neither see nor hear tell o' anybody."

Then Fraser, half angrily, turned back to Strathleven, muttering, "I dinna think Cameron need be sae strict wi' his 'right.' I'm an elder in the Kirk mysel', and my conscience is as gude as ony ither Christian conscience, and yet—if—I should—weel, weel, there is nae need yet to bespeak a Kirk Session anent me—and, maybe, I'll no be put in such a strait."

As he approached the castle gate he saw the same man again, but this time he knew him.

"Jasper Gordon," he cried, "I ken you, my man, sae just come out o' hiding."

The man came forward instantly. "I knew you also, Mais-ter Fraser, but you were with Cameron, and my news is not for Cameron."

"Your news! It is bad news, I see."

"Bad as can be."

"There has been a battle?"

"A huge massacre, say."

"The prince? I mean, Charles Stuart?"

"Has fled. He is among these hills."

"MacAllister?"

"He fell on the battle-field at the head of his clan. Some of them brought his body outside the line, and I took charge of it."

"God bless you for that kindness, Jasper!"

"I promised him. He fell before he knew that all was lost; he died with 'Prince Charles' upon his lips."

"And all is lost? Oh, Jasper, is this so?"

"All is lost."

"Where is Angus?"

"With the prince."

"And MacAllister's body?"

"It is in Ewen's shieling. We brought it in our wagon. I thought of Laird Hector; can he bear it?"

"He maun buckle up his heart, and try to bear it. Oh, MacAllister! My friend! My friend! You maun come to your hame once mair. Oh, MacAllister, we should hae died thegither!" The old man was quite overcome, and Jasper kept silence till he recovered himself. Then he asked,

"Who is there to carry him hame?"

"There is Ewen and Neil and two or three others. The clan was maist cut to pieces, for when Angus saw his father fall, and heard the clan raise a cry of lament, he placed himself in their front and shouted, '*To-day for revenge, to-morrow for weeping,*' and so led them into the thick o' the danger. It was a bloody charge, but those who escaped it will win back here again in a day or two."

Fraser made no answer, and the two men went down to the clachan. There was no light in Ewen's shieling, and the clansman sat on the low doorstep of his hut, slowly rocking himself to and fro, and moaning out in whispers a doleful coronach for his dead chief.

"Strike a light, Ewen."

He got up mechanically, never ceasing his moan, and lit a piece of pine-wood, which threw a smoky, fitful light through

the dark room. MacAllister lay on a bed of fresh bracken, his plaid was folded round him, and his sword was in his hand. His long, white hair, dabbled with blood, hung round his large, noble face, and the smile of triumph with which he had fallen lingered yet upon his lips.

Fraser knelt down beside him; he kissed his hands, his lips, his brow. "My friend! My brother! My love!" he cried, in a passion of grief; "for wha has Andrew Fraser ever loved but you?" Three or four Highlandmen rose silently from the dark corners of the hut and came and stood round their chief.

"He is our father; we did our best to save him," said Neil, softly.

"We wad a' hae died in his place," sobbed out another.

"An' thankfu' for ta honor and pleasure."

"Lift him gently; he must go to his hame once mair. He shall hae a decent burial, though the Duke o' Cumberland was at the strath head. Neil, you are his nearest blood here; spread your plaid for him."

Neil laid down his plaid, and the four clansmen lifted him as tenderly as a mother lifts her dead babe and laid him in it.

"Go slowly, Neil, and cry no coronach as you go. Laird Hector must be told first. Jasper, gie me your hand; you are a friend o' mine from this hour for the kindness you hae shown that dear bit o' clay."

"I loved him too. I am only a poor ignorant Romany, but I loved him."

Then through the darkness the sad procession took its way to the home which the dead chief had left so full of life and hope. They went noiselessly into the great hall, and laid him down where nine months before they had laid down the wounded Hector. Fraser remembered it, and pictured again to himself the clansmen and women running in with frantic cries, the nine hundred brave, bonneted men who would any of them that night have gladly died to save their young chieftain. MacAllister, their father, their leader, lay there now, and the

nine hundred were slain, wounded, and scattered; only four stood weeping above him. For these men never thought of hiding their tears; they had fought like heroes in battle, they wrung their bloody hands and wept like women above their dead.

In the meantime Hector had learned his loss, and he now stood white and stern beside the chief and father he had so loved and honored. His feelings found no vent in words or weeping; he stood tearless and silent by his sorrow. Nay, when the women came into the hall with loud cries and lamentations, he seemed unable to endure them. He motioned every one away, and he and Fraser alone kept the watch. Isabel, indeed, waited all through the long, sad hours outside the door, but she sat so motionless that no one suspected her presence until the gray dawn showed the slight, dark figure sitting with bowed head, listening.

At that solemn hour Fraser said, softly, "We must bury him ere the sun rise. I sent word to Cameron and Dominie Talisker last night."

"Can we not wait a few hours? What are left of the clan may arrive to-day."

"We must run nae risks wi' such precious dust. Would you like to see that brave head o'er Carlisle Gate?"

"God Almighty forbid! Oh, Fraser, if there is this danger, why have we waited? We could have buried him at midnight."

"He has lived a good Christian, and he must hae a Christian burial. Talisker could na be here before dawn. Tak' a mouthfu' o' wine and bread, and then bid the men come in."

They took the bread and wine and ate it together over the dead chief. What memories gathered themselves round that solemn meal! Both men wept bitterly, and were not ashamed of their tears. But the face of the dead was full of repose, and all its solemn curves were firm and sharp-cut, as if they were to endure for ages.

When the men entered, Fraser looked upon their weary, sor-

rowful faces, and pitied them. "Mak' no moan or cry," he said, gently; "this is your last duty to MacAllister; when it is done you can weep and rest." Then with his own hands he folded the tartan round him, and laid his chief's bonnet on his breast, saying, almost with a tone of triumph, "Tak' his sword, Laird Hector. MacAllister has won the last great battle!"

The men had made a rude bier, and covered it with fresh pine and bracken, and on this simple bed they carried their chief to the little kirk in the strath. Hector was unable to go with them; he walked to the great gate, and there, with a loud and bitter cry, kissed his father for the last time.

When they reached the kirk, Cameron, Grace, and Dominie Talisker were waiting, and a great crowd of women sat on the grass, weeping, and softly wailing the coronach. Then the plaid was lifted from the face, and all were allowed to take their last look. Suddenly a woman, white, and trembling with great age, tottered to the grave-side. Her presence turned the moaning sorrow of the women into an awestruck silence, for old Elsie had been long bedridden, and apparently indifferent, if not oblivious, to all earthly affairs.

Fraser, indeed, had supposed her to be dead, and was for a moment confounded by her appearance.

"Stand aside!" she cried, authoritatively; "who has right here but me? Did na I nurse him on my heart? *O hone a rie! O hone a rie!* I kiss thy lips again, babe of my breast! pride of my life! Would that I had died in thy place!"

"MacAllister's foster-mother," whispered Fraser to Grace.

"Good dame, come with me," said the dominie, kindly. "It will not be long until you see him again."

"You have had your day, dominie, let me hae mine—I, that have na spoke in twelve years or mair," and she lifted herself up, and spreading forth her hands, cried,

"MacAllister is in the assembly of the good,
Here is his tomb and his bed.
It is from hence he went to death,
From hence to the beginning of peace."

Then, turning her gleaming eyes on Fraser, she said, "Go back to Strathleven, and say this to Lord Hector:

"Strive not against fate,
When after Angus comes James,
And after James comes John,
And after Hector comes Hector,
The MacAllister clan is gone.'

The prophecy is as auld as the clan. *O hone a rie!* that these auld een should live to see it come true! Now you may tak' me away; when this sun sets I shall go to him who comes not back to me."

A kind of supernatural awe had fallen on every one; none had the will to interrupt her, and even when she had disappeared a strange inertness prevented for a minute the final act of love. The dominie roused himself first, and touched Fraser and Neil. They re-covered the face, lowered the body, and, with the aid of Cameron and Ewen, filled in the grave. In half an hour there was not a sound in the strath but the lowing of the cattle and the song of the skylarks.

Cameron and Grace went back with Fraser to Strathleven. Hector, as Fraser expected, was much worse, and Cameron urged him to allow himself to be carried to Assynt. "There is no use hiding the facts from you, MacAllister," he said; "English soldiers are scouring these glens with fire and sword. Fifty of your clan were butchered in cold blood within fifteen miles of home yesterday, and your castle will not escape a visit. If they spare your life, you will undoubtedly be taken to Edinburgh for trial."

"They shall na do it, Cameron. It is again the law."

"My friend, the country is under military law."

"And that's worse than nane. It is the deil's ain statute-book—a drum-head and a sword. You'd better gang, Hector; Cameron is thick wi' the vera warst o' the Whigs, and his word will maybe save your head for you. I shall stay here; I hae been through this mill afore, and I ken the clapping o' it."

Hector, however, resolutely refused to leave Strathleven, and Cameron, after a hasty meal, went back alone to Assynt.

“And I’ll not say but what I think MacAllister is right,” commented Fraser to Cameron, “for possession is nine tenths o’ the law—and, ’deed, I rayther think it is ten tenths o’ the law.”

“You will stay with him, I suppose?”

“You may be sure o’ it. Hector is now *The MacAllister*, and I would think little o’ him if he run awa from his rights.”

CHAPTER XI.

A FAREWELL.

“From Lochourn to Glenfinnan, the gray mountains ranging,
Naught falls on the eye but the changed and the changing;
From the hut by the loch-side, the farm by the river,
MacDonalds, MacAllisters pass—and forever.”

“*Ha til mi tulidh! Ha til mi tulidh!*

We return no more! We return no more!”

FRASER'S first thought was of Isabel. He had noticed her at the grave-side, for after all had taken their last look at the old chief she had stood for a moment weeping above him and then silently disappeared. When he found her in the castle she was so completely changed that for a moment he hardly knew her. Her hair, which she had lately dressed as Grace had taught her, was now in gypsy fashion, and was ornamented with a band of Indian coins and bangles. She wore gray ribbed stockings of her own knitting, heavy shoes, laced up the front, a short linsey petticoat, and a sleeveless bodice of black velvet. Immense gold hoops were in her ears, a quaint necklace of Hindoo workmanship round her throat, and broad silver bands clasped her arms round the wrists and above her elbows.

Fraser looked at her a moment with both pleasure and surprise; then he said, “What for have ye put on that unchristian-like dress, Isabel? You maun go to Assynt without delay, and that is nae kind o' visiting dress for a respectable family like John Cameron's.”

“I have nothing to do with John Cameron. I like him not.”

“But Grace?”

“I like her not either. Why should we try to be friends? She is a tame, sleek little house-cat; I am a lioness of the desert. I am going to my own people.”

“But, Isabel, listen to reason; the glens are full of English soldiers.”

“Jasper is waiting for me, and he is well known to them. No one hurts a gypsy girl; I shall be always welcome. Can I not dance, and sing, and fiddle, and tell fortunes? And who loves King George as I do?”

“Ah, Isabel, that is not true!”

“It is true!” she cried, vehemently. “I hate Charles Stuart! See what sorrow he has brought on this good, innocent family! what woes on Scotland! what tens of thousands have fallen by the sword, by the hangman, by hunger! Before to-night’s sun sets this very clachan will perish amid flames and the blood of women and children! Yes, I hate Charles Stuart! I am not of those women who love the hand that strikes them.”

He looked at her flashing eyes and impassioned attitude with a kind of fear. The girl at that moment seemed capable of any deed of peril or revenge. She lifted a broad black hat and a little cloak of fine scarlet cloth, and said, in a voice that suddenly changed to pathos and tenderness, “Let me kiss you once, you kind father. Let Isabel kiss you for all the good you have tried to do her.” And Fraser, with wet eyes, and a peculiar solemnity of manner, took the slight form in his arms and kissed her.

“Good-bye, Isabel; good-bye, little lassie. I ken not whether we will ever meet again, but you hae taught me, too, many a gude lesson, child. Won’t you see the MacAllister before you go?”

“I am going to him.” She kissed Fraser once more, and then went into the great hall. Hector was walking slowly up and down, his face flushed, and his whole manner betraying the greatest mental suffering.

“Sit down,” she said, authoritatively; “you will need all your strength; do not waste a footstep. I am come to say farewell. Listen to me and try to decide calmly. Hawley’s dragoons will be here anon. Fraser will be able to spare your life at first, but when Hawley has drunk enough some hour you

may perish in a moment's passion. Go with us to Edinburgh in disguise, and when there give yourself up to the civil authorities."

"I cannot do such a thing, Isabel. Do you not see that the blame of my escape would fall upon Fraser? I must submit myself to the fate of war and go as Hawley's prisoner."

"I will take Roderick and hide him in the wood. While Fraser is with Hawley to-night I will see that you escape, and have Roderick saddled and waiting."

"If you could do *that*, Isabel!"

"If you wish it."

"I do."

"Then it shall be done."

"Isabel, if we meet no more—if we meet no more, dear sister, you will take care of Angus?"

"Ah, that is what I am sure to do! I shall save him or die with him!"

The young chief then kissed her a tender "farewell." One thought was in both their hearts—that it was probably their last meeting on earth. In a few minutes he saw her go through the courtyard, leading his favorite horse, and she turned at the gate and gave him a cheerful nod full of hope and intelligence.

Fraser came in at the moment, and they walked out together, and leaned over the castle wall. The little clachan and the grassy strath lay in an indescribable peace and beauty; the far-up song of the larks, and the lowing of the cattle in the misty corries, were the only sounds that mingled with the still, white dawn. The men had little heart to speak, and, indeed, there was little use in speculating when every alternative seemed utterly hopeless.

"When folks dinna ken which road to tak', it's best to stand still," said Fraser, half to himself, and as if in answer to some mental dispute.

Hector smiled faintly. "The words echo my own thought, Fraser. I will wait and see what comes."

Instantly, and as if by magic, the lonely strath was filled with

horsemen galloping rapidly and steadily forward until there was an unbroken red line from one end to the other. Hector laid his hand on Fraser's shoulder, and a great groan escaped his white lips. Fraser lifted his eyes, and said solemnly, "Into thy care, O God, we commend these helpless souls!"

Before the words were ended, shrieks, shouts, and fiendish laughter drowned all other sounds, and in less than five minutes every shieling had been fired. It was with difficulty Fraser could then control Hector. He drew his broadsword, and—as men in such supreme moments do—forgot that he was but one man; he desired only to face his foes, though they were a thousand.

"You'll go back inside," said Fraser, peremptorily; "this is a battle in which one auld lawyer will be worth a' the MacAllisters. I ken Hawley, and he kens me. I'll go mysel' and see what can be done wi' him."

As he went he met some weeping, horrified women who had escaped, coming up to the castle. He took from his pocket some money and gave it to them.

"There's nae safety there, puir souls!" he said. "Gae your ways through the forest till you reach the seaside, then gang as quick as possible to Assynt. Cameron will gie you shelter; and bid him come and help to save MacAllister. Rin awa now, as quick as may be."

When he reached the strath the work of destruction was complete; every shieling was a blazing ruin. Ewen, Neil, and four other Highlandmen lay upon their swords before Ewen's cottage; they had evidently stood together determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible, and been shot down without even this poor satisfaction. As Fraser passed, some English soldiers lifted the men and threw them into the fire.

"Ye are gieing them an auld Roman burying," he said, scornfully. "Fling their swords after them—swords and dirks too—there's nae heritors for them, I'm thinking."

One of the soldiers turned with an oath, and pointed his gun

at Fraser. The old man put it calmly aside. "Ye hae drunk o' this devil's cup till ye hae lost your senses. I am Andrew Fraser, and if ye touch me you'll hae to count your bill wi' the hangman. Where is General Hawley?"

The fellow sullenly pointed out a man on a great gray horse, standing on a slight eminence overlooking the work of destruction. Fraser walked steadily towards him. Hawley and he knew each other, perhaps too well. There had been borrowing and lending between them, and some processes of law to put things finally straight between borrower and lender.

Fraser was uncertain how these memories would affect Hawley, and Hawley was pondering the conditions on which the borrowing could again be best effected. He was uncertain what side Fraser had taken in the rebellion. If he had gone with Prince Charles the way was clear and straight; Fraser would have to buy, at his valuation, a safe passport to France; but if he had retained his allegiance to King George, the road to the old lawyer's pocket would be more difficult.

"Morning, general," said Fraser, as calmly as if they were both on the planestones of Perth city.

The general turned haughtily, but, pretending to recognize Fraser, said, "Good-morning, Mr. Fraser. I hope I see a friend of his majesty's."

"You see a gude subject o' King George—and a gude friend o' General Hawley's to command. I cam' to ask you to Strathleven—or maybe you'd prefer to go to Assynt, where there is every comfort o' gude meat and wine, and gude company for-bye."

"I am for Strathleven first. There is a rebel there whose case I must attend to before I seek my own comfort. Has Hector MacAllister fled?"

"Not he! What for should he flee from his ain hame?"

"To save his life. He has been in arms against the king."

"You are a' wrang there, general. He was everything but killed before the rebellion began, and he has na touched sword nor gun for nine months. But, gude heavens, general! Your

men are firing the barns and storehouses and killing the sheep and cattle; the puir dumb beasts are na rebels, onyway!"

"I obey the duke's orders. I am to kill the males of all rebel clans, and destroy everything that can support life."

"Weel, I maun say, if I die for it, that an officer's commission in the duke's army is vera like a butcher's license."

"Mr. Fraser, consider yourself under arrest. I really do not know why I should be talking with you at all. The Frasers have all been 'out,' I believe. Is there any reason you should be exempted?"

Fraser took out the protection sent him by Duncan Forbes, and said, "I think that will exempt me, general."

"Certainly, Mr. Fraser, I recognize the authority of that document. Excuse me if I have been uncivil. I will go with you to Strathleven and see MacAllister. But I confess that I shall oppose saving him, he comes of a rebellious stock. His brother is known to be with Charles Stuart, and he intended and wished to be out."

"But you canna punish a man for *wishing* to do wrang, general. If that was any law, civil or military, we would all hae to kill one anither. *He was na out*. Whether he wished to be out or not is naebody's business."

This position was disputed with some acrimony; but one safe point had been touched ere they reached the castle. Hawley had insinuated that a fine might perhaps be accepted as indemnity, and Fraser had remarked "that he had a liking for the lad, and would be willing to gie a few hundred pounds if he could be got awa to France till things were settled."

However, when Hawley entered the castle hall and saw Hector, he took to the young man one of those sudden and unaccountable hatreds which defy all our analyzation, and probably have their origin in something that this life gives no hint of.

"Give me your sword, sir!" were his first words.

The haughty grace with which Hector complied with this command seemed to irritate him beyond all necessity.

“Take off his sash and bind his arms behind him,” he said to a lieutenant. “Let two men watch continually. Mr. Fraser, I will thank you to order some breakfast for me and my staff.”

The order was more easily given than obeyed. The women had taken Hector’s advice and gone to Assynt. There was nothing to eat in Strathleven. This state of affairs did not improve Hawley’s temper, and at length he determined to go to Assynt with his prisoner.

They met Cameron half-way; he was greatly shocked to find Hector bound and a prisoner, but a look from Fraser made him understand that any attempt to interfere at present in the young chief’s favor might be fatal to him. The journey was a very unpleasant one, but Hawley’s manner changed a little for the better when he found himself amid the elegances and comforts of Cameron’s home. Greatly to Fraser’s amazement, Grace appeared to welcome them. She had taken exceeding pains with her toilet, and met Hawley with a fascinating cordiality. Hawley felt its power at once; he spoke with less noise and authority, and was altogether less offensive.

The dinner and wines were excellent, and the general seemed inclined to prolong their pleasures. John Cameron, at a hint from Fraser, had excused himself early in the evening, for, as the wine disappeared, the lawyer and the soldier were growing confidential, and even friendly. In fact, they were discussing the terms on which Hector would be allowed to return to Strathleven as a non-combatant under bonds for good behavior. Not that Fraser trusted in the faith or honor of Hawley regarding any such agreement; he simply hoped to insure Hector’s life until he could enter into recognized and lawful arrangements for the settlement of MacAllister’s position.

In the meantime two women were considering the same question. Cameron had given Grace a large sum of money, without a word, but she knew that it was to be used for Hector’s freedom. She managed to make Fraser understand that he must keep Hawley interested by any pretext; beyond this she was fairly at a loss what step to take.

Hector, with his guard of eight men, was in the large kitchen of Assynt, and she ordered for this guard a sumptuous repast and whiskey in abundance. "I must fight evil with evil," she thought. "When men are drunk they forget their duty."

About eight o'clock she determined to go and see what the chances for Hector's escape were. Her heart sank as she neared the servants' quarter and heard the tipsy shouts of laughter and the wild clapping of hands. She stood still to listen, though she felt sure that it would be impossible for her to enter the room. Then she heard a voice that amazed her—a wild, clear voice, singing a song that she knew could come from no one but Isabel. Something of curiosity and something of pique now mingled with her fear and anxiety. This girl was again between Hector and herself. She could not bear the uncertainty, and she opened the door.

Isabel saw her in a moment, and by an almost imperceptible movement of the eyes asked her to come forward. Isabel was standing on a large table, singing, and dancing the Romalis, while a handsome gypsy youth sat on the floor, and accompanied her movements with the tambourine. At her entrance the guard moved impatiently, but stood up to receive her. She made gracious inquiries as to their treatment, ordered more liquor and refreshments, and pretended to be much interested in their gypsy entertainers.

While she was asking Isabel some questions relating to her dance, the youth with the tambourine rose, asked her gracefully for alms, and softly whispered, after his effusive thanks, "Bring us a pair of scissors."

She knew the voice; she looked earnestly at the gypsy, and she knew him. It was Angus. One look between them was sufficient. Then she left the kitchen, managing as she did so to pass Hector and drop her fan at his feet; and as she stooped for it to whisper a few words of love and hope.

Grace went first among her women, and had a conversation with them, the result of which was that one by one they joined

in the revelry, and in half an hour it was evident, from the sound of a fiddle and the stamping feet, that a general dance had succeeded to Isabel's solo performance. Then Grace dressed herself in her maid's simplest costume, snooded back her hair like a peasant girl, and in a moment of the wildest fun slipped in among the dancers. She passed Angus several times, however, before she could find a safe opportunity to give him the scissors and the gold.

When she did so, Angus whispered, "Tell him that Jasper holds his horse at the north gate. I will be here to help him at the proper hour. Bid him keep awake."

It was so long before she found any opportunity of approaching the prisoner with this message that only her great love for Hector could have nerved her to bear the ordeal. But at length Isabel and Angus took an ostentatious leave of the company; they had perceived that the guards were no longer masters of their senses. They, indeed, took the precaution to examine Hector, who was apparently asleep on a pallet of bracken in a corner. Stupidly they turned him over, looked in his face, and tried his bonds; and then, appointing two of their number for the first watch, the others fell at once into a deep unconsciousness.

Hector was painfully awake. He knew that Angus had been present; he expected him to return every moment. Nor had he long to wait. In half an hour he stole into the kitchen, and, keeping in the darkest shadows, glided up behind Hector, set his hands free, and whispered, "Come!" Just as they reached the door one of the watch moved in his drunken doze, and muttered something.

"Go on," said Angus to Hector, "I will speak to him. What are you dreaming about, my brother?"

"Oh, is it you?"

"It is me, my brother; me, the gypsy boy."

"I had a dream—a bad dream."

"Lie down now. I will tell you what it means in the morning."

In a moment or two the man had dropped heavily off to sleep again, and then Angus followed Hector to the north gate. Jasper held the horse, ready to start. Hector held Grace against his breast in a sad, heart-breaking embrace.

"Haste, my brother, haste!" whispered Angus; "all our lives are in danger."

Then Grace and her maid turned silently away. Hector, stooping from his horse, took the hands of Angus and Jasper in one passionate grip, and the little company disappeared as if by magic.

It was scarcely daylight when the noise and tumult in Assynt warned Grace that Hector's flight had been discovered. Hawley was soon awake, and unsparing in his insolent accusations both of Fraser and Cameron, and he would have put both gentlemen under arrest if they had not been protected by President Forbes's authority. Strangely enough, the real culprits were never suspected; and even when some one suggested the gypsies the captain of the guard indignantly refused to entertain the idea—"he had himself put them out of the house and locked the door after them." Of course he did not know that Margery had very gladly opened it again, in obedience to Grace's commands.

Hawley refused any further entertainment, mounted his company in hot haste, and, in the hearing of Cameron and Fraser, said,

"My men, it is the MacAllister you are to find, and when found, I want no prisoner. You understand me?"

Fortunately for Hector he had a horse very swift and powerful, and almost as intelligent as a human being. The best and shortest way to Edinburgh was also well known to him, and as he approached the city he judged it most prudent to keep to the open road, and ride as if there was no necessity to avoid notice. He reached Leith in safety, but was so exceedingly exhausted that he determined to throw himself on the mercy and generosity of President Forbes.

He rode straight to his house and asked for an interview.

That noble man, and best of Whigs, granted the request at once, though it must be acknowledged he was somewhat amazed when the fainting, handsome gentleman tottered towards him and said, "I am Hector MacAllister; I am fleeing for my life! Do what you think best with me, president."

"Then, MacAllister, if you submit yourself to me, I think bed, and some meat and drink, best for you;" and with these words he led Hector away to a luxurious sleeping-room, and bid him be at perfect ease until he could decide what must be done.

There was really little to decide; the only plan promising peace or safety at the time was to escape from the country. Prince Charles was yet at large, and some of the nobles were still in arms in the extreme northern and western Highlands. Until the prince was secured there would be no mercy for his adherents, and the scaffolds and gibbets of the country were finishing the bloody work begun at Culloden.

"You must go to Holland, MacAllister," said his preserver, "until these unhappy days are over. I counsel you to avoid all intercourse with France, or the unhappy House of Stuart, and Andrew Fraser and John Cameron together will surely be able to finally save your name and estate."

Two weeks afterwards Cameron arrived in Edinburgh with his daughter, who was seriously ill. They were accompanied by Fraser, who was very restless and miserable; but the whole party were rendered comparatively happy by a few casual remarks of President Forbes.

"You are still factor for the MacAllisters, I suppose, Fraser?"

"I dinna ken whether there be any o' them living," said the old man, with a trembling voice.

"I heard of Hector MacAllister to-day; he is in Amsterdam."

"The Lord be thanked! and may his blessing be on Duncan Forbes!"

"My friend, we will give God all the thanks."

“Ay, ay! we are all his subjects.” Then, quite unable to control himself longer, he said, “I dinna care what comes o’ it, Forbes. I loved thae MacAllisters root and branch—father and sons—and I am fair broken-hearted about the ruin of such an auld, grand family.”

“Why should it be ruined? Things will sort themselves soon. MacAllister has powerful friends; he can pay a fine and keep his estate if he will only have the sense to lie low till the storm blows over. He will come to his own again, never fear!”

“You think sae, Forbes?”

“I do.”

“Then Andrew Fraser will awa back to Strathleven and keep things thegither.”

“I think for humanity’s sake you ought to do that. The widows and children of the dead clansmen must be suffering for food and shelter. As the poor fellows themselves straggle back they will need some helper and adviser.”

“I will go, Forbes; I will go at ance. If the question of MacAllister should come up when I am not about, ye’ll see and get the fine made as light as possible—it will hae to come out o’ my pocket in the meantime.”

“I will do all I can to pleasure you, Fraser; but you must mind that I am not the court, I am simply the president of the court.”

So Fraser, after imparting the news of Hector’s safety to Cameron and Grace, prepared to go back to Strathleven. It was very welcome news to both of them, and Grace whispered, “Dear Mr. Fraser, you are the best of all doctors, and I will soon come and help you to put the castle of Strathleven in order for Hector’s return.”

There seemed little prospect of this. In spite of the enormous sum set upon Prince Charlie’s head no one would betray him. Month after month passed, scores of the humbler classes had perished by the hangman, and great numbers of the noblest heads in Scotland had been laid upon the headsman’s

block, but neither for fear of death nor love of gold would they give up to his enemies the poor prince who had brought such desolation on the land he loved.

However, with the hope held out by Forbes, Fraser returned to Strathleven and gathered together the poor remains of the once powerful sept. Fortunately it was summer weather, and a few bothies in the forest sheltered those who could not find shelter in the castle. Fish was plentiful in the lochs and game on the hills, and, with John Cameron's aid, enough meal to last them many months was stored in one of the large rooms of the castle.

In the following September it became known that Prince Charles, after incredible dangers and sufferings, had escaped with a number of gentlemen to France, and that they had been received by King Louis with an ovation. Both England and Scotland received the news with satisfaction. Even the most rabid Whigs were satiated with slaughter; and there were hundreds of thousands who, though opposed to Prince Charles on political grounds, had yet a chivalrous admiration for his youth, valor, and sufferings, and also a sincere respect for the men who had served him with such passionate and unselfish devotion.

In the full tide of this merciful reaction Fraser procured a hearing of the MacAllister case. In point of law there was nothing against Hector; he had never been in the field for the Stuarts. But his father had forfeited the estate by dying in active rebellion on the field of Culloden. It required all the powerful influence that Fraser could bring to bear upon the Court of Sequestrations to save Strathleven for a family identified with every "rising" for the exiled Stuarts. Finally, however, Hector was allowed to return to his estate, on the condition of paying a fine of £10,000, and giving bonds for his future loyalty in the sum of £100,000.

It was a sad enough home-coming for him, although it was in the full glory of the northern summer.

"But we'll soon hae a' as bonnie as Assynt," said Fraser.

"I hae the plans ready, and in ten years, if you be carefu' and thrifty, you'll be the richest man in Sutherland."

Then Hector remembered with a pang how he had first discussed these plans with Fraser, and how impatient he had then felt of a system which had since found a bloody though famous grave with the noblest hearts in Scotland.

"But I shall insist on the clan following your advice, Fraser," he said, firmly; "it shall be good for them as well as for me."

Fraser looked at him sadly.

"Hector," he said, "you must hear the truth, and you must thole it bravely. The poorest MacAllister that ever wore brogues is as much laird o' himsel' now as you are. You'll hae to *hire* such o' them as choose to wark for you. Your father was *the last chief o' MacAllister!*"

"And what am I, then?"

"Just Maister MacAllister, that is a'. There have been twa or three acts passed since you left Scotland that will mak' many a ane ask whether they are themsel's or some ither body. In the first place, you'll no be allowed to wear dirk or sword again. All Highlanders are to gie up their arms next month. You arena to speak Gaelic, nor wear a bit o' tartan, nor don a kilt or philibeg mair. You'll hae to stick to your French fashions and braidcloth now. If ye dinna, ye'll be sent o'er the seas for seven years."

"But these are outrages?"

"Ay, ay! but what can't be cured must be endured; and there's worse to come. The next act abolished all heritable jurisdiction, and absolved every clansman from his allegiance. You are the law no longer to them. Ye daurna lay a finger now on the meanest gillie that tak's his oatmeal from you. But dinna hang your head, man—you are MacAllister for a' that, and you'll wark, and save money, and folks wi' money can buy aught they want—a dukedom, an' they fancy it."

The loss of his power and family title was a great blow to Hector, but it was broken by some familiarity with English cus-

toms, and by an education that had in some measure prepared him for the change. He had sense enough to accept graciously what he could not refuse, and to enter heart and soul into those plans for the improvement of his immense tracts of land which had already been projected by Cameron and Fraser. In these changes the rights of Angus frequently came up for discussion. It was known now that he was with Prince Charles in France, and actually in command of one of the regiments stationed at Dieppe, Boulogne, and Calais, which were impatiently awaiting the efforts of the Stuarts with the courts of France and Spain.

"But Charles will never raise another army, and they will hae to disband sooner or later, and by that time the Act o' Indemnity will be passed, and Angus can come his ways hame again," said Fraser.

"He shall have the Reay country," said Hector, with ready generosity; "he always liked it."

"That is breaking your land in twa, Hector; the estate maun be kept thegither from Reay to Assynt—that and no less. We maun find some ither way for Angus. I'll no hear tell o' breaking the land."

On this subject Fraser could come to no settlement, but it was finally taken out of their hands and decided for them in a way that neither of them could have anticipated.

One evening in the early part of December, 1748, more than three years after the rebellion, Fraser was sitting before the blazing fire in his own parlor at Dornoch. A small round table stood on the hearthrug, with a pretty tea-service on it, and a plate of toast stood browning on the broad steel fender. He had put on his slippers and old coat, and as he sat warming his toes before the fire he looked complacently at the cold meats and potted fish that were so comfortably arranged before him.

"I wonder now what is keeping Kirsty and the teapot?" he said, impatiently; and then he rose and went towards the parlor door. He had probably some intention of hurrying Kirsty, but before he reached the door he reached the window, and his

attention was arrested by the heavy flakes of snow darkening the whole horizon.

"Just in time. I wonder whether the sheep-faulds on the Reay Hills are finished!" Full of this thought, he stood a moment at the window, and as he did so a handsome carriage drove rapidly to his gate. The sight was so unusual in the little Highland town that he did not move until he saw descend from it a tall, military-looking man. The next moment he was at the open door, bareheaded, calling out joyfully, "Angus! Angus! I ken it's you. Come in, you dear lad!"

"Oh, Fraser! but I am glad to see you! Go in out of the snow. Have you room for my wife?"

"Bring her in. Bring her in. What are you keeping the puir thing in the storm for?" And Fraser ran back and stirred up the fire and pulled the sofa beside it, and called up old Kirsty with a promptitude that almost sent the old woman into a fit.

"Oh, my bonnie woman, but you're gladly welcome!" he said, as he stooped and kissed the dark, handsome face lifted to his. "Tak' off your cloak, my dawtie," and he began to undo the small gold clasps.

"Be careful, be careful, Mr. Fraser," said Isabel; and as Fraser threw off the velvet and fur wrap, there she stood blushing and smiling, with a lovely infant, fast asleep, clasped against her breast.

"Take care, you must not wake him; it is little Andrew Fraser."

"You don't say so! Oh, the bonnie bit bairn! And it's a lad bairn. And it's my ain namesake! This is mair than I can bear. Let me hold him, lassie."

"No, no! you might wake him, and then he would be very cross and angry. Get some pillows and put them on the sofa, and we will lay him down."

It was really a charming sight to watch the old man and the beautiful mother bending over the fine, sturdy little fellow, and Angus enjoyed it keenly.

"I dinna care much for bairns," he said, with an air of apol-

ogy, "but your bairn, and my namesake, is a bairn out o' the common." And again he stooped and softly touched the dimpled hands, that seemed miracles of beauty to him.

It was a wonderful evening; Fraser was never tired of admiring Isabel and the baby. She was greatly improved. Teachers, modistes, and good society had done much for her. She had been tenderly loved, and shielded from sun and storm, and her beauty had acquired that milder grace and delicacy which imparted to it its crowning charm. It pleased Fraser to see that she was in no way spoiled. She retained all her pretty Oriental ways of silence and loving submission. To her Angus was evidently something greater and better than any mortal man. It was a grief to Fraser when she complained of weariness and lifted her baby to retire. He asked to be allowed to hold it in his arms a minute, and Isabel laid it against his breast. His eyes filled with tears, and he turned to Angus with a look of intense pleasure.

"Thank you, my dear lad," he said, softly; "you hae gien me the height o' pleasure."

When they were alone both remained silent a few minutes. Angus spoke first.

"So Hector is married?"

"Ay is he. It is a good marriage, Angus. They loved each ither—and it's a grand estate now."

"They waited long."

"That was Cameron's fault. He wasna for the marriage till the Act o' Indemnity had passed. If it had been before, the court might hae got some plea for a bigger fine. MacAllister wedded to John Cameron's heiress would hae been too cheap at ten thousand pounds. There was nae use flinging awa guid gold; and they are prudent young things, and took the advice o' them that kent the warld and its ways. But we had a grand wedding after the act, and John Cameron gied his daughter fifty thousand pounds down. There are wonderfu' improvements going on. I am doubting, though, if you can get o'er the mountains till this snaw melts."

"I must. Our ship is at Leith; a week is all the time I have."

"Your ship! Now whaur are you going?"

"I am going to the Virginian colony. It is a grand country, and there are plenty of Highlandmen there who went after Killiecrankie and Sheriffmuir. It is the place for born Arabs like Isabel and me."

"Then Charles Stuart comes no more to Scotland."

"No more! Never again, Fraser. The treaty signed last October at Aix-la-Chapelle compelled Louis to put him out of France. Our regiments were disbanded, and the prince, broken-hearted, retired to Avignon."

"And you love him yet, I see."

"Love him? I would die to serve him this hour. I did not leave him till he bid me do so. My prince! my prince!" sobbed Angus, passionately.

"Hush, hush, Angus; I canna bear it; there are gude days coming yet to Scotland."

"The Scotland of my father was good enough for me. I love Scotland, but I hate George, and when Scotland's enemies make Scotland's laws I cannot thole the shame of it. I must see Hector, and then I leave Scotland forever, unless—unless—"

"Nay, nay, Angus. The Stuarts will never come back here as kings. They may ask now for puir Rob Roy's coronach: '*Ha til mi tulidh! We return no more!*'"

The next morning Angus started for Strathleven alone. Isabel was not so anxious to see Hector and Grace as to risk the mountain passage with her baby; and Fraser was very eager for them to remain with him. Indeed, Angus himself was unable to accomplish it, and after a desperate but abortive effort was obliged to return to Dornoch. However, there are consolations in all disappointments, and Angus comforted himself with the thought that he should at least carry with him into the West the memory of an unchanged Strathleven—"and of Hector too," he added, mournfully. "Hector must have

changed, when all around him has changed. I would rather keep the memory of his face as I saw it that night he fled away from Assynt, when he stooped down from Roderick's back and kissed me 'Farewell.' "

The week passed all too swiftly for Fraser. It was, perhaps, the happiest week of his whole life. He gave up his entire time to Isabel and "wee Andrew," and he scarcely knew which of them he loved best.

At last the day came for them to sail. It was a bright, cold day, and Fraser carried "wee Andrew" in his arms to the ship. The child had become very fond of him, and it was a pleasant sight to see how its baby ways lightened the grief of parting. He gave it to Isabel with a blessing, and then hurried away from the little outstretched arms.

And in that moment, somehow, he thought of his old friend MacAllister, and of his tender love for his son Angus; and, as old Scotchmen often do yet, he lifted his bonnet solemnly to the memory, and grasped Angus's hand with an almost fatherly love and sorrow.

"Gude-bye, my dear, dear lad. I shall not die till you come back to me; I shall wait for you. You will not disappoint me; and you'll bring up in a God-fearing way yon dear bairn, and you'll be a gude husband to yon bonnie woman; and when you reach Norfolk just call on Peter MacDonald & Company, tobacco merchants, and you'll find that I have na forgotten you;" and with these words poor Fraser pulled his bonnet dourly over his brow, and with a sore heart turned away from the three faces he loved best on earth.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

“ Make room for rest around me !
Till, in deep calms of space, my soul
May right her nature.”

MANY assert that life to be the most happy which affords no material for record. After the three stormy years of the rebellion such a life had fallen to the lot of Andrew Fraser, and calm prosperity and success had been added to the blessing of a wonderfully green old age.

It was twenty-seven years since he had parted from Angus, and he was still waiting for his return—waiting it now with a hope and impatience that was very trying to his aged heart, for he had written and asked Angus to come and see him once more, and he was anxiously looking for the answer to his letter. He had calculated the time carefully, he had made allowances for all likely detentions ; the letter was now due, and he was watching for it.

A heavy snow was falling, and the air was strangely still. He had walked restlessly all day between the fireplace and the window, but the early night settled down, and the postman was now hopeless. Kirsty came in with the tea-tray, and reminded him, a little authoritatively, that “ he was an auld man now, and had nae business awa from the fireside on sic a stormy day.”

He sat down with a sigh, and put his slippered feet upon the fender. There was an air of sadness and disappointment upon his face, as true and unaffected as that one often sees on the face of a little child, and Kirsty, with ready sympathy, set herself to relieve it.

"I just brought in twa cups," she said, cheerily. "There has been a stranger on the bars for three nights running, an' the cat has been washing her face as if the king himsel' was coming. I'm maist sure you'll be haeing company, deacon."

While she was speaking he had stood up, with head eagerly bent forward, and every sense strained to the utmost.

"I hear him coming, Kirsty! Set wide the door, my woman."

"'Deed, deacon, I'll do nae such thing—siccan a night as this."

"You'll open the door, Kirsty! Quick, woman, he's chapping at it now. I'll go mysel'."

And sure enough there was a loud and eager knocking and the stamping of snow-bound feet, and the next moment the cheery sounds of a voice that shook the old man's soul to its deepest depth.

"Fraser! Fraser! how are you, dear old friend?"

"Angus! Angus! I kent you'd come. I kent you'd bring your ain answer. Oh, my dear lad, I am willing to go now that my een hae seen you ance again. What are you standing there for, Kirsty? Bring in the boiling water, and the best of a' there is in the house."

"Why, Fraser! You scarcely look any older than when I left you."

"But I feel aulder. I haena been o'er to Strathleven for twa years, Angus, and then I went in a carriage, and had to tak' a rest or twa. I shall never go again o'er the bonnie hills; it was my farewell visit to the castle. And I canna walk as I used to do, and I canna read and write much now; but thank God I hae little need to do either much now, and yonder letter I wrote to you is dootless my last ane. But my wark is a' done, and my house is in order, and now that you hae come my heart is quite satisfied. I'll just hae to wait calmly now till I am dismissed."

"How is Hector? I have heard little of him for many years."

“Did you not get a letter from him a few days after mine?”

“No; I left within twenty-four hours after the receipt of yours. It would have been an ill thing to keep such love as yours waiting; and if I had never seen you again I should have found it hard to forgive myself.”

“That is like you, dear lad. Then you hae a deal to see and hear tell o’, but it is a’ gude. First you maun tell me o’ Isabel and yoursel’, and o’ a’ that belongs to you, for you were a meeserable letter-writer, and I ken little anent your affairs. You hae built a new Strathleven. I made that much out. Whar is it?”

“If there is a Paradise on earth it stands within it, Fraser. But it is not like the old Strathleven. It is only a big, white, rambling house, with deep verandas on every side, and every veranda is covered with vines of wonderful flowers or of great purple grapes. The humming-birds flit among the blossoms, and the swallows build under the eaves and chatter to the children who play beneath them. It has a lovely park full of great oaks and beeches, and the park slopes down to the corn and wheat and tobacco fields. There are blue mountains behind and a grand river in front, and the endless woods and plains stretch away and away, hundreds of miles away.”

“Thank God! And you are rich and happy?”

“I am rich, and I am very happy.”

“And Isabel. Bonnie woman, what o’ her?”

“Isabel has borne me ten children, six braw sons and four lasses, almost as lovely as herself. And, Fraser, you will rejoice over this news—she has learned to pray with her children. No one can call her a pagan now, she was baptized more than twenty years ago.”

“I thank God, Angus; wi’ my whole heart I thank him for this news. Now, about my wee Andrew?”

“He is a fine, stalwart fellow, a head taller than ever you were, Fraser, and very like my dear father. You heard of his marriage, I suppose?”

“Yes, yes; a French lassie, you said?”

“The daughter of a noble French Protestant emigrant, Lucia de Fontaine. She had no money.”

“Tut, tut! she had birth and was of the right faith, and if she had beauty and virtue, that is as much as any man deserves. I approve o’ my Andrew no wedding money, it is just what I expected o’ a lad called after my honest name.”

“My second son, Hector, married a little English girl, and pushed west to the Blue Ridge. Gavin is at home with his mother, he is managing for me in my absence. Isabel, our eldest daughter, is wed to young Francis Beaufort—the Beauforts are a fine old family.”

“I ken that. I looked up the family when I heard tell o’ the marriage.”

“The others are at Isabel’s knees yet. She has been a noble wife to me, Fraser. We have been very happy.”

“And the land, man? I hope you hae ta’en care to get plenty o’ land. Land is the main thing, Angus. Hae you done as I told you?”

“There are forty thousand acres of the finest land in the world in the name of MacAllister. Every son of mine will have a fine estate; there is space enough for children and children’s children to spread the name.”

“If they’ll stick thegither, Angus; if they will only stick thegither! But they hae got a roving drop in their veins. Hector, you say, has gone west already?”

“He chose the farthest away land I owned as his portion. He has my own fancy to be by himself.”

“Weel, weel, for a’ that has come and gone, you hae had a grand fortune, Angus. You are satisfied?”

“I am very happy. I did well to go to Virginia. When changes come it is best to take them in your own hand. I have always been glad that I did not see Strathleven before I left, for all these years I have had the blessing of the old memory. Now I shall lose that, for I must get over the hills somehow this time.”

“It will not be hard to get o’er the hills now. The earl has

had a fine road made, and there are change-houses, and all conveniences for travel. The earl's carriage was here a week syne; had I kent you were coming I would hae detained it."

"Thank you, Fraser; but I like not to take favors from strangers. A good horse is all I need if the road is open. Who is this new earl? When I left Scotland MacAllister was the greatest man in the MacAllister country."

"I forgot, Angus, that you hadna received the advices from your brother ere you left Virginia. The Earl o' Reay and Asynt is Hector MacAllister! We hae got a' we looked for, Angus. The MacAllister sits in the House o' Lords now! If your father could hae seen this day "

A dark frown had gathered on Angus's brow.

"*Who is MacAllister of MacAllister, then?*" he asked.

"There is nae MacAllister now. Some say, Angus, that Reay was the auld name o' the family. Anyhow, it is the new name, and when folks are seeking an earldom they canna stand on names. Hector has done weel, baith by himsel' and by the estate. Why, Angus, you arena vexed at your brither's windfa', surely?"

"What do you take me for, Fraser? If Hector can be satisfied to accept titles from a usurper, that is his business. There is an old proverb about the receiver and the thief; but if George steals from Charles, why should not Hector take from George? It is a private question of conscience. *I* would not take a dukedom from the House of Hanover. I would not live on the same continent with them. If there were ten thousand miles between them and me, all that space would be full of anger and hatred between us. But listen. I have great news and grand news for you, and for every one who loves truth and freedom. There is going to be another rebellion against these little German tyrants, and this rebellion is *sure to succeed*—as sure to succeed, Fraser, as the sun is sure to rise to-morrow!"

"What? Angus! The Stuarts arena' coming wi' blood and fire and death again, I pray!"

"No; but the colonies are going to rebel. We are going to

kick George and his satraps over the ocean. We are going to be free men. We will have neither king nor kaiser to rob and drive us. George the Third is going to lose a grander empire than the Stuarts ever dreamed of. There is not a Scot now getting ready to arm that does not remember George the Second and Butcher Cumberland. What they owe to the father they will pay to the son."

"Angus, you let rebellion alone."

"This is revolution, not rebellion. We are certain to get our independence! I know it! The ship I brought over laden with tobacco has gone to France. What for, Fraser? For arms and ammunition. I shall carry them back with me; there are strong hands and brave hearts waiting for them."

"Don't do it, Angus. Don't go near France."

"I am going farther. Can you guess where? Oh, Fraser! can you guess where?"

"I darena think o' it, Angus! Oh, my dear lad, why do it?"

"Because he is poor and forsaken and sorrowful, and I have money for him, and love—"

"But he is sair changed, if a' that is said be true. He is broken and fallen, and even those that love him can have little sympathy for him."

"Then they never loved him. Who would not be broken-hearted and fallen? Have not all his friends broken truth with him? His brother has been a traitor to his cause; his wife has wronged and deceived him. Hope, love, ambition—all slain! My poor prince! Who would not pity thee?"

"Oh, Angus! what a true heart is thine!"

"Fraser, I sold my tobacco for £10,000, but the prince needs £12,000. You must add the £2000; I expect it of you. George may have your duty, but *I know* you love Charles. And he is in debt and care and sorrow! He is your lawful king, the chief of all the Frasers, as well as of the MacAllisters. You are a poor clansman if you know your chief to be in need and help him not."

Fraser listened with glistening eyes; he had sat watching An-

gus with the greatest interest and admiration, and when he ceased he rose quietly, went to his desk, and wrote out slowly a draft on his banker for £3000; "That is £2000 for your asking, Angus, and £1000 just as a bit pleasure for mysel'. And you may say to him that his puir clansman, Andrew Fraser, begged him no to lose a heavenly crown because he didna win again his earthly ane. Tell him that Scotsmen a' look to him to carry his sorrowful cup wi' a steady hand."

Then he gradually turned the conversation towards his own affairs. He told Angus that all he had, excepting his property in Dornoch, had been turned into gold and devised to his namesake. "As for this little estate," he said, "I hae long intended it for a bit charity o' my ain fancy. I hae left it to bring up a dozen or mair mitherless girl-bairns. It will do well by a dozen now; and if Dornoch grows as I calculate on it growing, the number can be increased."

"Why girl-bairns, Fraser?"

"I thought o' the girl-bairns, Angus, for twa reasons. First, plenty ither folk hae thought o' the lads; there are colleges mair than enough for them. Second, because the best and happiest hours o' my life have been those in which I was wi' some gude woman. For my mother's sake, and for the memory o' Bessie and Isabel and Grace, I am a thankfu' man, and I hae done this to show it."

The next day Angus took the road to Strathleven. The snow was over, and the skies clear and blue; but his heart was unusually heavy. He was sensible of being out of time and tune with all around him, and he felt no elation in family honors which not only came from a source he despised, but which, in a manner, obliterated the family name.

On the way he found everything changed. Men who had fought at Culloden had bowed to the new dynasty, given up their tongue and dress, their sword and dirk, and gone to ploughing and herding. Living in the country, what could they do but accept the inevitable? Angus acknowledged this, but he was almost glad to see that both men and women were silent,

gloomy, and dissatisfied, and eager to hear him tell of the grand land beyond the sea, and the freedom and prosperity of their countrymen there.

He approached Strathleven just after sunrise. The little clachan had become a very respectable village. Straight streets of stone cottages had replaced the picturesque but irregular shielings, and there was now an inn, at which he left his horse.

“New lairds and new customs,” he sighed; “in my father’s time the poorest MacAllister would have scorned to have taken pay for a lodging or a meal.”

He knew the woman who brought him a glass of milk and some oaten cakes, but she had forgotten him, and he would not remind her how he had once stood up for her good name, and made Black Dugald of Assynt do her justice before the whole clachan.

Thoughtfully and sadly he sought the mountain path. It had been graded and widened and trimmed until it had become a very practicable carriage-road. The underwood had been cleared away, and the great single pines sang soughfully to him as he passed. At the little wood where he had first seen Isabel he paused. The very trees under which they had sat were there. He and Isabel had grown older and less fair; they were stronger and fairer than ever. He stood a moment under them and looked around. There were many changes. Little vistas had been opened, and little lawns cleared, and here and there marble statues of wood-nymphs gleamed white amid the black trunks of the snow-laden firs.

The courtyard of the castle was open, there was no fear of an enemy now. Its fantastically cut box-trees, its peacock-house and conservatory, irritated Angus. He had not seen the courtyard of Strathleven since he and his father had marched out of it at the head of a thousand plaided warriors. But if the court gates were open, the hall doors—that had always stood open during daylight—were shut and locked, and he had to knock some time before they were opened.

The man in plush and powder contrasted so strangely with

his remembrance of Neil MacAllister, in kilt and dirk and checkered hose, that for a moment he felt like a man in a dream, though his voice was wakeful and angry enough when he detected the menial's sneer.

"Is the earl within?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"At Assynt Castle."

"Will he be here to-day?"

"No."

"Let me pass; I wish to go through the castle."

The man refused, and there was a loud and angry debate, which might have ended in serious mischief had not an old servant recognized the visitor, and fallen at his feet in a passion of weeping and congratulation. But even then he felt himself to be watched and doubted, and he only visited the great hall and his mother's bedroom. In both the furniture had been entirely changed. Nothing in the hall remained of the old time but his father's great oaken chair, and nothing in his mother's room but her portrait.

It wounded him deeply to see it there when all else had been changed. "It ought to have been hung beside my father's and his first wife's portrait in the picture-gallery," he muttered. "If it is not worthy of a place there it ought to go with me, and it shall." After this discovery he did not much care to go to Assynt, but he had made up his mind to have the picture, and he must needs ask it of Hector. So he went.

Assynt had also been greatly changed, but here the changes were all extensions and additions. It had, indeed, become a residence worthy of a man who wore an earl's coronet and whose wife the queen delighted to honor. He dismounted at the main entrance, and the porter opened the gate.

"The earl?"

"He walks within."

And the man pointed to a little alley lined with fancifully cut holly-trees. Hector's back was towards Angus; and when

the earl heard footsteps behind him he turned sharply round. Angus stood still; he had no desire to force his brother to a warmer acknowledgment than he wished. But even this thought wronged Hector, for his heart, with the lapse of years, had only grown more tender towards his exiled brother, and when he perceived who waited for him he went to meet Angus with a welcome whose warmth and sincerity not the most jealous love could have doubted.

Yet it was a strangely solemn meeting. Angus could not help thinking that Hector had become a sad and thoughtful man. His new dignity seemed to give him no pleasure; he disliked all allusion to it, and quietly put aside all conversation but such as referred to Angus and his American home. After an hour's walk they went into the castle. Hector was sure "Grace would be delighted," but the change in Grace was the greatest change of all. She was very kind and courteous, but Angus could not help asking himself "if this could be the eager, enthusiastic girl that he had last seen pinning the white cockade on 'Charlie's men' in the courtyard of Strathleven."

She had always paid a great deal of attention to her toilet, but it seemed to Angus that she had dressed the Countess of Reay and Assynt with a quite unnecessary splendor. Her robe of white satin, with a fine gold net over it, would have suited the *salons* of St. James or Windsor, and the jewels on her head and throat and arms did not hide the fading beauty of the matron of forty-seven.

She spoke of her father, and said he was failing very fast. Angus asked to see him, and found John Cameron in a slippered, prosy old age, that could talk of nothing but his daughter, Countess of Reay and Assynt, and the infinite goodness and condescension of her Majesty Queen Charlotte. But she never named the poor prince whom she had once so devotedly loved. He had failed, and Grace was of that order of women who regard failure as the unpardonable sin. Angus was too gentlemanly to remind her of it; he allowed her to prattle

away about her eldest son, Lord John Assynt, who was in the army; and her second son, who had gone on some diplomatic mission, and her youngest, who was at Oxford.

Parenthetically, she remembered Isabel and her trans-Atlantic nephews and nieces, and rather ostentatiously remarked that she had heard that Mr. Fraser intended leaving all his money to his namesake, "and how nice that would be!" And when Angus answered that his son Andrew had already an estate whose acres outnumbered those of Strathleven and Assynt combined, and had married a daughter of the Count De Fontaine, she seemed amazed, and half doubtful. Evidently Angus and his family had not been a subject of much interest or much conversation in the Assynt household.

So it was clearly best that Angus should return home as soon as possible. He signified his intention the next morning, giving as a reason that he wished to pay his duty to Prince Charles before returning to America. He made the statement without parade, and in a voice full of pathos. Hector glanced kindly and proudly at his brother, and set his lips tight to conceal his emotion. Grace pretended not to hear the remark, and John Cameron looked angry and nervous, and began talking in a forced and eager manner about some parliamentary debate.

There was little show of leave-taking. Cameron sheltered himself behind his great age; Grace took a brooch of coral and gold from her throat and sent it to Isabel, and Hector, calmly, but resolutely, prepared himself to accompany his brother. Grace manœuvred, and Cameron called the new earl to his side, but Hector said, in a simple, dour way, which Angus knew of old was invincible, that "he intended to see his brother sail, and that his stay would be determined by that event."

They left on horseback together, and in half an hour had recovered their old selves. When they had rode about a mile they stopped by a common impulse; the next moment they leaned forward and kissed each other as tenderly and joyously

as if they were once again boys; and after that they fell into a conversation which drove every shadow between them far away.

Angus asked for his mother's picture, and Hector not only had it packed and sent away while they ate lunch at Strathleven, but afterwards he opened a private drawer of his own, and showed Angus all her jewels and laces. "They belong to Isabel," he said, "and you must now take them." Then he drew from off his own finger a splendid diamond, and said, "Give her this with my true love and respect, and tell her I have never forgotten that I owe my life to my sister."

It pleased Fraser greatly to see that Hector had come back with his brother. "I kent you would do it," he said, almost gratefully; and he watched the two men, as they wandered about the hills or sat talking by his fireside, with a keen and tranquil delight. Angus stayed a week in Dornoch, and then bid a long and last "farewell" to the old man who loved him as a father. No one but God saw the parting, but Fraser said solemnly after it, "Now the bitterness of death is over."

Hector went with Angus to Leith, and waited by his brother's side till the anchor was weighed and the captain hurried him ashore. During these last days together all their old love and confidence had been restored, with the addition of that sorrowful tenderness attached to every companionship which we feel is *the last* one that time shall ever give us. Poor Hector! He had always loved Angus, but never so dearly as when he watched him sail away out of the sight of his eyes and the reach of his affection forever.

Of his visit to Avignon Angus never spoke. He wrote to Fraser concerning it; but after the old man had painfully spelled out his letter, he put it in the fire and shut his mouth forever on that subject. Contrary to all reasonable expectations, he rallied greatly; and when the war between England and her American colonies broke out, no one was so eager about despatches, or so chary about expressing an opinion concerning the colonists. Some people, indeed, asserted that he sided

with the rebels, and many averred that he had been heard to laugh quietly to himself when the news of Bunker's Hill came. All agreed that the Frasers were dour folk, and never had liked the House of Hanover. But Fraser, as well as John Cameron, knew how to get behind his great age when he thought it good to do so.

It was a snowy night again in the closing days of A.D. 1781. Fraser, now nearly one hundred years old, lay dying as gently as a child goes to sleep. No one but the Earl of Reay was with him, and he had left a gay party at Assynt, in spite of much opposition, to comfort the last hours of his old friend and counsellor. A little girl came softly in and laid a letter on the bed. Fraser saw it, though his eyes were apparently closed.

"It is from Angus," he said, in a thin, glad voice; "read it, Hector;" and Hector read in the old man's ear these words: "Father, good news! George's men have absolutely surrendered; this on the 19th of October. We are free! I have sent the prince word by this mail." Through the mystical gray on the face of the dying man a faint rose-color stole, he looked long and steadily at Hector, with a happy smile, and when the smile faded away he had "fallen on that sleep" from which there is no waking.

Ah, well! These things were all more than one hundred years ago. The good knight Angus, so true, so brave, and so constant in his love, is now dust, "and his good sword rust;" but for all that the name he loved lives on in many a brave tale, in many a frontier romance and song. For he was the founder of a family which, in every expedition of daring and adventure, and on every field where freedom has fought her battle over again, has had its representative. There was one among the hardy band that penetrated into the trackless plains of the polar ice-fields. They were among the first explorers of the Rocky Mountains. On the battle-fields of Texas and in the dungeons of Mexico the name is a familiar one. For with their valor and constancy there has been mingled just so much of

the roving Romany blood as has made them pioneers in every frontier movement. For the rest,

“They love their land because it is their own,
And scorn to give aught other reason why ;
Would shake hands with a king upon his throne,
And think it kindness to his majesty.”

THE END.

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
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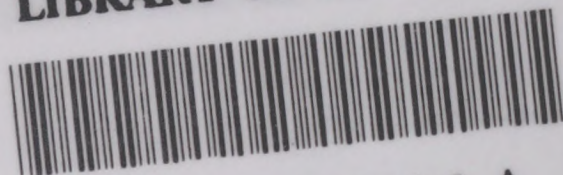
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